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CITY OF OAKLAND
POLICE DEPARTMENT

OAKLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT
HISTORY 1900 - 1919
(PART 2)

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PART II

A HISTORY OF THE OAKLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT

1900 to 1919

by

Phil McArdle

The years between the turn of the century and the end of World War I were years of ferment all across the United States. As the nation changed from an agricultural to an industrial society, and the population of the cities grew, urban institutions were subjected to unprecedented stress. "The city is the storm center of our civilization," wrote Walter J. Petersen, Oakland's Chief of Police in 1915. Matters not recognized earlier as important problems became burning issues. Reform came to be seen as an urgent necessity.

The desire to improve American life through social, political, and economic reform which characterized this period has led historians to call it "the Progressive Era." Nationally, the movement was embodied in the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Roosevelt's program, "the Square Deal," called for ending corruption in government, limiting monopolies, and conserving national resources. Wilson described his domestic program as "the New Freedom."

The Progressive Era addressed a large list of issues, and an impressive -- if uneven -- number of reforms resulted. These included protections for industrial workers, child labor laws, sterner laws against prostitution, local prohibition statutes, the Harrison Act, and votes for women.*

Achieving reform proved more difficult than optimists expected. At the turn of the century, to take one issue as an example, children were an important part of the labor force. While this seems self-evidently wrong to us now, it was harder to see then.

*California women received full voting rights in 1911, nine years before the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was passed. Revisionist historians fault the progressive movement for its performance on racial and immigration issues.

Children had always worked on the farms, so the idea that they should work in the cities was not inherently shocking. With sixth grade education the norm, a working class child of ten was considered old enough to "help out." Employers were under competitive pressure to hold down labor costs, minimum wage laws did not exist, and a child could be hired for less than an adult. This meant that there was a place in the labor market for children -- as contributors to family income, or, for the emancipated, as their own sole support.

But factories were not farms. Industrial working conditions were dreadful. The hours were long, the pay was low, the factories were unsafe. Despairing men and women fled their work, even abandoning their children to escape it. Arrest warrants for violation of P.C. Section 270, Failure to Provide, were among the most commonly issued in Oakland in the opening years of the twentieth century.

Even so, as bad as working conditions were, many people opposed restrictions on the use of child labor. To deprive families of the income provided by their children, it was argued, would cause hardships. In the case of emancipated or abandoned children, a factory job "saved" the child from roaming the streets and becoming a criminal. Furthermore, the argument went, there were no alternatives: what else could be done?

In fact, the society as then constituted had not found a solution for this problem. The fight for child labor laws required the reformers to persuade people of the necessity for profound changes.*

The reform movement was multifaceted. As related to police work, according to Gene and Elaine Carte in Police Reform in the United States, some historians distinguish between "moral" and "civic" reformers:

The moral reformers concentrated upon the evils of poor social conditions and vices like liquor, prostitution, and gambling...[But] the civil reformers...were more interested in improving the efficiency of police departments in their role as protectors of personal safety and property.

These two strains of reform, working sometimes in conjunction and sometimes at odds with each other...agreed that a healthy police department was one that was as far removed as possible from direct control by elected officials.

The Department as we know it today took shape during the Progressive Era. Civil service reforms were implemented, women entered the police service for the first time, and the automobile arrived, bringing with it extensive changes in patrol procedures and traffic enforcement.

*In 1918 and 1922 the U.S. Supreme Court struck down major child labor reforms as unconstitutional.

In 1900, according to the account of the Department given by Merritt's History of Alameda County,

Equipment was scanty and rapidly becoming obsolete. One or two ancient horse-drawn patrol wagons without ambulance service were in use, while a number of scattered ill-kept and unsanitary lock-ups served as branch detaining jails. The main police headquarters was little better. The housing conditions at the City prison were not much better than in the late 70's when Mayor Andrus had called attention to the need for better accommodations...

By 1915 the situation had been greatly improved and a high standard attained. In 1905 the old Board of Police and Fire Commissioners, in existence since 1889, laid plans for improving the police department. From year to year these plans were realized, as the city's income warranted...The chiefs who were particularly instrumental in bringing about the reforms instituted by the Board of Police and Fire Commissioners were S. C. Hodgkins, Adelbert Wilson, and W. J. Petersen.

Many of these plans were implemented during the mayoralty of Frank K. Mott (1905-15). Oakland historian Peter Conmy has described Mott as "a progressive Republican, a visionary who saw a great future for Oakland." His administration was often pointed to as an example of good government, in contrast to "Boss" Ruef's corrupt machine in San Francisco.

Chief Hodgkins*

St. Clair Hodgkins was appointed Chief of Police on July 1, 1899, by unanimous vote of the Board of Police and Fire Commissioners. Hodgkins was a highly experienced officer. He joined the force as a "special" in December 1885, and was appointed to the regular force in 1889, serving as a patrolman, clerk, and patrol wagon driver. In 1895 he was promoted to Sergeant, and in 1897 he became a detective, earning a reputation as "the best in the city and among the best on both sides of the bay."

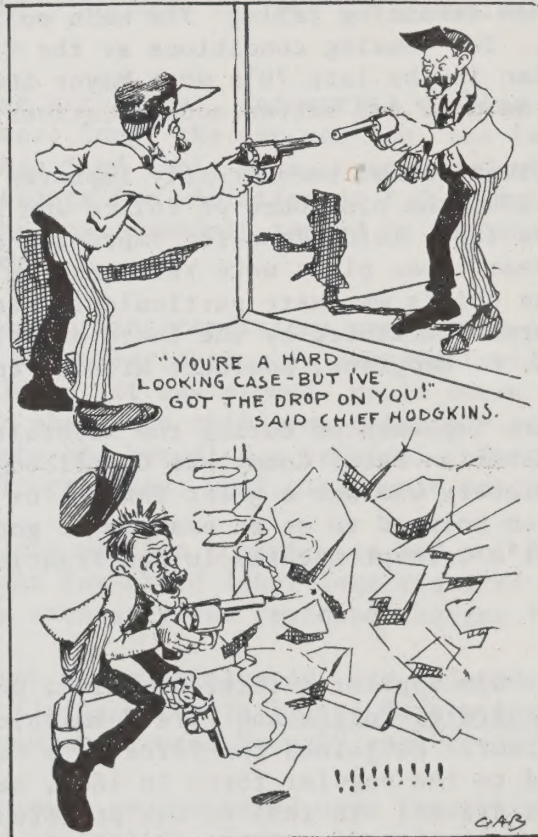
In addition to helping the Commissioners plan improvements in the Department, Hodgkins campaigned vigorously for increased police manpower. In the 1905 annual report, he wrote,

This city embraces eighteen square miles, over 237 miles of streets, and a population of about 105,000. The increase of trade in this city, the influx of new residents, the carrying out of plans by the

*Hodgkins' service record states that after seven years as Chief, he was "reduced to Detective June 2, 1906." He became an Inspector July 8, 1911, and served in that rank until his retirement on April 4, 1924. Born on December 6, 1863, he died at seventy-nine years of age on June 2, 1943.

CHIEF HODGKINS IS FOOLED BY A MIRROR

April 14, 1900
Mistakes His Reflection for a Bold
Burglar and Shatters Glass
With a Bullet.
Oakland Police Dept. Chief of Police



VALIANT CHIEF SHOOT AT HIS IMAGE IN A GLASS.

OAKLAND, April 13.—The telephone bell in the police headquarters jangled violently late last night, and some one very much out of breath informed the Chief that burglars had effected an entrance into the residence of ex-Mayor John K. Glascock during the absence of the owner, and suggesting that if the police hurried they could capture the men.

Chief of Police Hodgkins immediately prepared for action. Taking with him a squad composed of Sergeant McKinley and Policeman Ely, the Chief boarded a patrol wagon and hurried to the scene. The wagon clattered noisily up in front of the Glascock residence, and the policemen dismounted, revolvers in hand, and deployed in open order while moving up the front yard. Leaving Policeman Ely in the yard to do outpost duty, Chief Hodgkins and Sergeant McKinley moved directly upon the residence. Opening the front door with a skeleton key the Chief threw the portal open and jumped quickly into the hallway in order to surprise the men at work.

Burg enough, there the men were at work right at the lower end of the hallway. They could be plainly seen by the dim light from the gasjet burning in the hall. There was just enough light to see that the men were there and that they were armed. Chief Hodgkins realised that he must act quickly, for the men had revolvers as well as he and Sergeant McKinley. The sharp crack of his revolver was followed by the crashing of glass, and a fifteen-foot pier mirror at the end of the hall was shattered.

The Chief was in citizens' clothes and had seen the same "burglar" that Denmy Landrigan, who is keeping the house for Mr. Glascock, imagined he had seen.

Chief Hodgkins' Burglary Call

local street railway system, all combined have built up localities which were formerly the outskirts of the city.

While these improvements have been in progress, the Police Department has in no way been increased. The work and responsibility in every branch of this department have more than doubled within the past few years, yet the numerical strength of the Oakland Police Department stands the same as it did for the past three years, and the requirements are much too great for the present force to adequately handle.

Hodgkins was not exaggerating. Population had increased by about 40,000 since 1900. The Department had 61 officers in 1900, and only seven or eight had been added since.

Chief Adelbert Wilson*

Captain Adelbert Wilson succeeded Chief Hodgkins on January 2, 1906. Like Hodgkins, Wilson had started as a special police officer. During the early years of his career (see Part I) his service was interrupted by political vicissitudes which had a lasting impact on him. Promoted to Sergeant in 1877 and to Captain in 1899, according to a newspaper of the time, he

...could earlier have obtained the chieftaincy but declined for the reason that the head position was in politics and was a plum which successive administrations plucked for special favorites. Wilson knew that if he retired from the position of captain and secured that of chief the term would come to an end 'for cause,' but without investigation and he would be dropped...He accordingly did not accept the position until...he was entitled to retirement both by reason of age and years of service.

But it was Wilson's distinguished record and recognized leadership which led to his appointment as Chief -- when he was ready to accept it. In Merritt's History of Alameda County, Wilson is described as

... 'the grand old man' of the Department. He always suppressed vice and crime with vigor. He was noted for the consistency with which he backed up his men in the discharge of their duty, and his advice and counsel, as well as his keen appreciation of merit where he found it.

Four months after Wilson became Chief, the ordinary routine of police work -- and all planning for the future -- was suspended by a catastrophe.

*Chief Wilson's salary was \$3,300 annually. When he retired after 42 years of service, he received a pension of \$1,650 a year. He died on March 25, 1915.



Chief Adelbert Wilson
January 2, 1906 to October 1, 1912



Chief Walter J. Petersen
October 1, 1912 to July 1, 1915 and
May 15, 1916 to August 24, 1917

The 1906 Earthquake

In the early morning hours of Wednesday, April 18, 1906, the great earthquake and fire leveled San Francisco. By comparison, Oakland weathered the quake with little damage. But water, telephone, and telegraph services were disrupted. On Eighth Avenue, the Methodist Church and Oakland High School were wrecked. At 12th Street and Broadway, Kahn's Clothing Store collapsed into the Empire Rooming House next door, killing five people. Many other buildings sustained serious structural injuries.

Within hours Oakland officials recognized that a major disaster had occurred and began to take energetic steps to deal with it. In How Oakland Aided Her Sister City, Harris Bishop wrote that Chief Wilson conferred with Mayor Mott and immediately called out "every available peace officer for urgent duty...and before the sun had well brightened the dawning day the streets of this city were under thorough patrol."

Throughout the emergency, Chief Wilson worked closely with the Mayor and other officials to take the necessary steps to meet the disaster. In the afternoon, as the great fire began to darken the sky over San Francisco, Oakland requested assistance from the National Guard and the regular Army. Mayor Mott admonished the public to stay indoors, to avoid congregating in large groups, and to take extra precautions while building fires. The District Attorney closed bars and liquor stores in Oakland "until further notice."

The most serious problem confronting officials developed as a tide of refugees poured across the bay. In the three days following the earthquake 200,000 dazed and homeless people sought shelter in Oakland.

Chief Wilson had a force of only seventy-one officers with which to meet this crisis. While awaiting the arrival of the National Guard and the regular Army, he took strong measures to support the City's plans for assisting the influx of refugees. A 6:00 p.m. curfew was declared on City streets, and violators were swiftly arrested.

Volunteers erected tent cities at Idora Park (a commercial amusement park near 60th and Telegraph) and along the shores of Lake Merritt. As the military units arrived, they were assigned to aid in the relief work by helping to organize the camps and supervise the distribution of food and clothing. In a report on the performance of the troops under his command, Major James B. Irwin, Ninth Cavalry, wrote, "The necessary protection of stores at the subsistence and clothing depots...were secured by...military guards...In no instance was it necessary for the military to use force, and the few arrests were made by the regular police officers of Oakland."

Until the bars were reopened and the curfew lifted on May 1, the overall crime rate dropped sharply. According to Percival's Municipal Justice in The Melting Pot:



Relief lines at Oakland City Hall, following the 1906 earthquake.

...fewer arrests were made in Oakland during the two weeks following the earthquake (121) than in the two weeks preceding it (160). Martial law and chaos reigned in San Francisco, but there was no disorder in Oakland, despite a sudden tripling in its population. Oakland arrests jumped sharply only after the lifting of the curfew and the reopening of the saloons on May 1. Police made special efforts to keep the lid on. In the two weeks following the reopening of Oakland saloons, a total of 555 arrests were made, over 80% of which were for drunkenness.

Chief Wilson's decisive measures and the diligent work of his seventy-one officers prevented rioting or looting which would have compounded the property damage caused by the earthquake. By preserving public order they limited -- and eased -- the sufferings of thousands of unfortunate people.

In the late summer, due to the turmoil caused by the earthquake, a crime wave marked by brutal robberies broke out on both sides of the Bay. It reached a climax in Oakland on October 15, when armed robbers held up a streetcar and killed the motorman, John H. Tenny, and W. P. Trubody, a warehouse watchman who attempted to prevent their escape. The two robbers were soon apprehended, but in the meantime clergymen and other community leaders held meetings to organize a vigilance committee; women were reported to be arming themselves with revolvers. Chief Wilson responded by meeting with concerned citizens all around the city. He said, "We do not need a vigilance committee in this city. We can handle the situation." The Chief was as good as his word, efficient police patrols reduced the level of fear in the City, and no vigilance committee was ever formed.

By year's end, the City appeared to have returned to normal, but it was never to be the same because so many of the refugees decided to make their homes in Oakland. The U.S. census shows that between 1900 and 1910 Oakland's population increased by over 83,000, the largest single spurt in its history. Most of these new arrivals came after the quake of '06. This permanent, major increase in population marked the transformation of Oakland from a relatively small town into a big city.

As the City changed, so did the Department. Less than two years after the earthquake, its complement had risen to over 100 for the first time ever. By 1915, the Department had a total of 208 officers, triple the complement of 1905, and was well on its way to becoming a modern police force.

The Department's performance during the 1906 earthquake could be called the "grand finale" of the nineteenth century Department, the greatest test of its capacity. In meeting their responsibilities during this emergency, Chief Wilson and his officers achieved a sterling success.

The Police and The Automobile

The automobile first came to the attention of the Department as an enforcement problem. As autos became more numerous, they caused increasing

problems in terms of noise, speed, and danger to pedestrians, horse-drawn vehicles, and streetcars. In August, 1906, the Department began a special effort to control vehicular traffic. Four officers issued fourteen traffic citations in one day, and the newspapers reported that Chief Wilson was "determined to stop fast driving":

Officers Caldwell and Doolan are stationed in the vicinity of Eighth and Brush Streets...The officers stand on the corner, watch in hand, and time the flying autos as they speed toward them; if the speed is too great they rush out in front of the machine and place the chauffeurs under arrest. The State law provides that in the residence districts the highest speed for automobiles is ten miles per hour. In the more sparsely settled regions they can run their machines at 14 miles per hour. Patrolmen Crossman and McCready are stationed at the corner of 24th Street and Telegraph Avenue.

Chief of Police Wilson states that the speed law must be observed and that arrests will continue until such time as the owners and drivers of machines observe the provisions of this law.

Before long, the leadership of the Department began to see that the automobile could be more than a nuisance. Its speed and mobility could be adapted to police patrol methods.

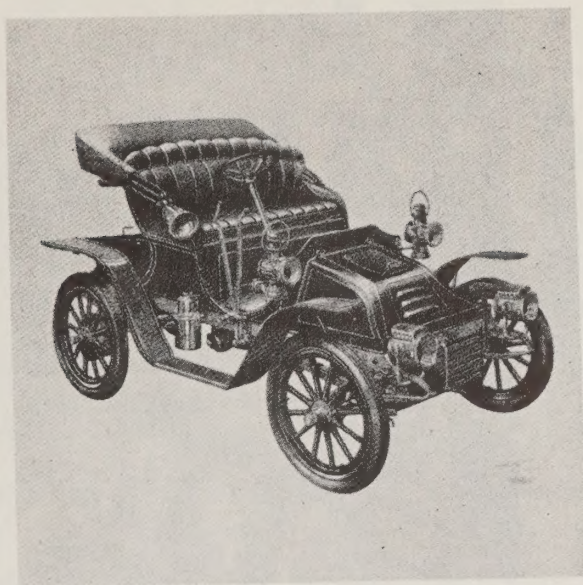
On October 16, 1906, Chief Wilson proposed to the Police and Fire Commissioners that the Department experiment with an automobile. The Commissioners agreed unanimously. When the City Council appropriated \$250 for the temporary rental of an automobile, the Department became the first police organization west of the Mississippi to use a patrol car.

According to one account, the vehicle and its owner "drove up to City Hall with pomp and ceremony each evening at 6 o'clock, to serve as a taxi for the police until 2 a.m. the next morning." Early in December it was reported that the "auto has been found to be so successful in dispatching officers to the scenes of reported crimes that Councilmen believe that a permanent machine should be built." Officials were particularly pleased by the time saved in delivering officers to crime scenes "after the streetcars stop."

The Departmental budget for 1906-07 allocated \$2,936.50 for the purchase of a two-seater Auto-Car for full-time use. This car boasted Fisk tires and a four-cylinder engine.

In 1907, the Department also purchased a motorcycle (\$279.00) and a motorized patrol wagon (\$3,650.00).

The patrol wagon, which doubled as an ambulance, had an electric motor. It was soon found that the cost of batteries and "Presto Re-Charges," which amounted to almost \$1,000 per year, was far higher than the cost of fuel for gasoline-driven vehicles. The electric engine was also disappointing because it lacked sufficient power. According to Roderick Petersen's "Narrative



The Auto-Car



1907
Officer Grossman and Driver Harry Brown in the Department's electric patrol wagon.



This was probably the Department's first motorcycle. The same model was adopted by the Berkeley Police Department about this time.



The 1908 Pope-Hartford, occupied (left to right) by Captain Petersen, Captain Lynch, Captain Bock, Sergeant Curtis, Chief Wilson, and Officer Ahern.

History of Progress in the Oakland Police Department," whenever a call had to be made on a hill, "the horses had to be called out because this electric was incapable of pulling anywhere except on level ground." Even so, it remained in service until 1912.

Adoption of the automobile led to the creation of a new position, the "Police Chauffeur." In addition to driving, the chauffeurs were required by regulation to "make all minor repairs and adjustments and have their automobiles ready for police business at any time of the day or night." The Patrol Wagon Drivers already in service, who were charged with "the care and comfort of the horses and the good condition of the wagon and harness," were given the added responsibility of keeping the electric wagon "and all apparatus used in connection therewith clean and in good order."

In 1908 the Auto-Car wore out. By this time, according to Petersen's "Narrative History,"

There were many different kinds of automobiles and the Police Department had no means of knowing which was the best. It was therefore determined that a road race would be held, open to the vehicles then available for purchase. The day came for this race and lined up at 14th and Broadway were Pope-Hartfords, Cadillacs, Appersons, and many others of that day and vintage. The route of the race was out Broadway to 22nd, east on 22nd to what is now the intersection of Lakeshore and MacArthur Boulevard, up the hill, through a rutted field and out to San Leandro over a route roughly that of MacArthur Boulevard today. The racers then turned south on Estudillo to East 14th Street and then west back to City Hall Plaza.

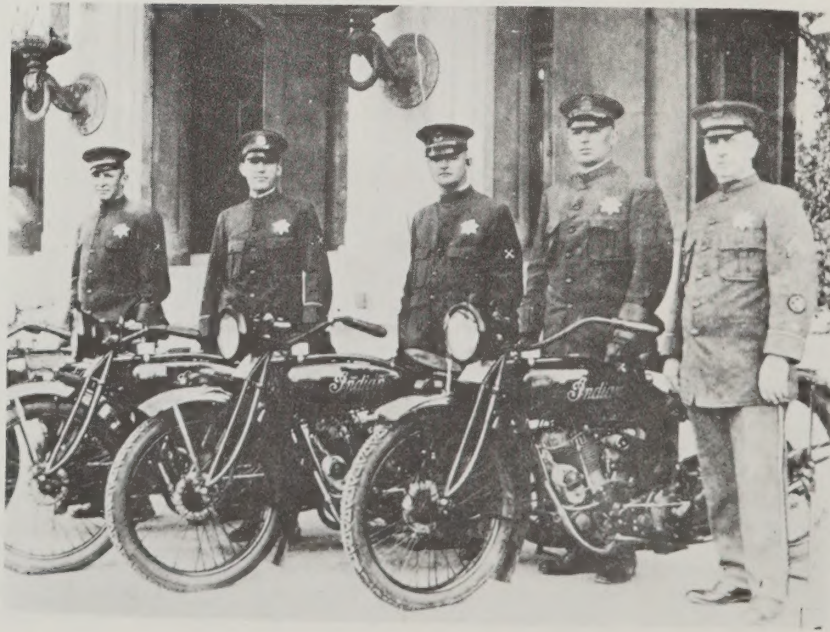
The first car to finish was a Pope-Hartford, having made the run without a stop. The second was [also] a Pope-Hartford, but its driver had lost a little time, since he had a puncture and it took a half hour to change the tire. Some of the entries didn't get past the first hill, others were scattered along the line of the race with various mechanical troubles. The Department therefore purchased two Pope-Hartfords, one of which was made into a combination patrol wagon and ambulance, while the other was generally used as an emergency car or to drive the mayor or other very important persons, as the occasion demanded.

The Pope-Hartfords were succeeded by Fords. And from then on, the Department purchased increasing numbers of automobiles.

Foot patrolmen and officers mounted on horseback found it increasingly difficult to enforce the traffic laws as the number of automobiles in Oakland rose. When it became evident that they needed assistance, special motorized details were organized to operate during periods of particularly heavy traffic.



The 1914 Ford Patrol Vehicle



The Motorcycle Squad, 1914

Several years of experience showed that the patrol cars were not as efficient for traffic control in congested areas as the motorcycle. In the 1913 budget, therefore, Chief Petersen asked for the purchase of motorcycles for traffic control. The City Council approved, and in 1914 Oakland's first motorcycle squad came into being. Ten Indian motorcycles were purchased to be used for traffic enforcement and for ensuring the safety of pedestrians.

The advantages of the new machines were balanced by new risks, as the Department discovered on August 22, 1914, when Corporal Alfred M. Poulter "met his death while in an automobile hurrying to a fire in the Melrose district. He was...with Officer Manning, and the machine in which they were riding skidded and collided with a telephone pole."

By 1916 the Department had almost completed conversion to the automobile. The History of Police Department published in that year proudly states:

The motor-driven ambulance and patrol system of the police department of Oakland are up-to-date in every particular. Besides the combined ambulance-patrol automobiles used in general police work, there are in the service high-power machines for emergency calls, as well as a detachment of patrol cars for outside patrol duty in residential districts. These cars carry two men each and are equipped with fire extinguishers, fire axes, first aid for injured outfits, and pump guns.

On November 24, 1917, the last four horses then belonging to the Department were sold at a City auction, and Chief Nedderman announced that the Department was completely motorized.*

The Police Bulletin

The first issue of The Police Bulletin, the predecessor of today's Daily Bulletin, appeared on July 22, 1907. The purpose of the new publication was described to the members of the Department in an introductory statement by Chief Wilson:

I take pleasure in presenting to you the first number of THE POLICE BULLETIN. This little paper is another step onward from the methods we have employed in the dissemination of police information and will call to your attention the fact that we are rapidly advancing along metropolitan lines.

THE POLICE BULLETIN for the present will be published once a week and will be in the hands of the members of the department on Tuesday

*In 1982, sixty-eight years later, the Department resumed the limited use of horses in the Central Business District.

of each week. It will contain the orders of the Police Commission, Chief of Police, new ordinances, descriptions of persons wanted, important arrests and such other information interesting to the Police Department.

The officers and members of the Police Department will be expected to retain and file the copies of THE POLICE BULLETIN for their future reference and it is to be understood that the information contained in the paper is for their personal use and is not to be discussed by them with persons not connected with the department.

It is hoped...that the BULLETIN will be of material assistance in the arrest of criminals, recovery of stolen property and the suppression of crime. It is dedicated to the City of Oakland and it is to be hoped that it may have its share in promoting a healthy growth, and the peace and good order of our city.

It was divided into sections; e.g., "Important Arrests," "Operations of the Courts," "Cancellations," "Lost and Stolen Property," "Look Outs" (later changed to "Wanted by This Department"), "Wanted Outside of the City." As the need arose, it also included changes in General Orders or the Municipal Code, copies of letters to the Department, and communications from the Chief of Police.*

Typical entries from early issues of the Police Bulletin included the following:

Ben Guthrie, arrested by Patrolman Thomas Wood assisted by Detectives Hodgkins and Green for three charges of obtaining money by false pretenses.

E. J. Barry, arrested for manslaughter by Chief of Police Wilson and Captain of Detectives Petersen.

Henry Kia, arrested for vagrancy (pickpocket) by Inspectors Wallman and Flynn.

William H. Koster, arrested for failure to provide, by Patrolman Caldwell.

Y. Yamada, arrested for burglary, by Inspectors Quigley, Drew and McCarthy.

*The Police Bulletin remained a weekly publication until the 1940s, and provides an invaluable insight into the day-to-day operations of the Department.

Wm. Johnson, arrested for assault with a deadly weapon, by Patrolmen G. D. Burbank and T. F. O'Neil.

* * *

Burt Lewis, sentenced to one year San Quentin, for pimping, by Judge Stanley Smith.

Ah Fong, sentenced to two years county jail for assault with deadly weapon, by Judge Ogden.

Milton H. Roller, sentenced to five years San Quentin for grand larceny, by Judge Ogden.

Robert Andrada, held to answer at Pleasanton for murder, sentenced to Folsom Penitentiary for life, by Judge Ogden.

Cora Webber, held to superior court for obtaining property by false pretenses, Judge Smith, Department 1.

* * *

Cancel No. 3396 - Bulletin No. 156 - Marie Yanovich arrested for grand larceny and bond jumping.

Cancel No. 4603...Mary Hatch found dead.

Cancel No. 4716...Taggart arrested.

* * *

Wanted for passing fictitious check, C.H. Johnson, age 30 years, height 5 feet 8 or 9 inches, weight 145 pounds, dark complexion, smooth shaven, dark hair.

Wanted for grand larceny, Harry A. Kosmos, age 40 years, height 6 feet, weight 140 pounds, German, ruddy complexion, pimply face, brown hair, graying, blue eyes, smooth shaven.

Runaway Boy, Gorden Graves, age 15 years, height 5 feet 7 inches, weight 135 pounds, dark complexion, dark hair and eyes, circular scar above left eye. Wore dark green suit, light fedora hat with DARK BAND, very heavy tan shoes... \$25 reward for information as to his whereabouts. Kindly make special effort.

The "Lost and Stolen Property" section of the Bulletin contained an endless list of missing automobiles, watches, jewelry, and personal property.

The Bureau of Criminal Investigation

In 1907 Chief Wilson proposed to increase the efficiency of the Department by restructuring the Detective Bureau as the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, with a Captain to head it, and higher rank for the detectives. This was approved by the Mayor, the Commissioner of Public Health and Safety, and the City Council. On October 1, 1907, Captain Walter J. Petersen was appointed by unanimous vote as Oakland's first Captain of Detectives.

Plain clothes detectives had been a part of the Department since the early 1870s. Dave Rand and Eburn H. Woolsey were the first officers regularly assigned as detectives. In the 1880s and '90s Albert Shorey and Dennis Holland became outstanding investigators. But until 1907 they were all classified, essentially, as patrolmen on special assignment. They worked for the Chief, and took their assignments directly -- and only -- from him. The Detective Bureau was small, never numbering more than four members, and relatively informal.

The new Bureau was given "jurisdiction over all thefts, embezzlements and felonies," and all reports of such crimes were to be referred to the Captain of Detectives. The authority to assign investigators to cases was delegated to the Captain of Detectives; when the Chief of Police was absent from the City, the Captain of Detectives became acting Chief of Police.



The Inspector's Bureau in 1910: first row: H.E. Green, William Quigley, Captain Petersen, St. Clair Hodgkins, and Dennis Holland; 2nd row: Tim Flynn, William Kyle, Lou Agnew, Richard McSorley, James T. Drew, and Harry Caldwell.

Under the new organizational format, as stated in the Rules and Regulations of 1912, detectives and assistant detectives were given:

...the brevet rank of Second Lieutenant and Sergeant, respectively, to fix authority and responsibility, but they are not to assume authority in matters that concern only the uniformed force. In case of necessity, while working on matters within the scope of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, they shall have the authority to direct and command all members of the police department below the rank of First Lieutenant of Police, but such authority shall cease as soon as the work upon which they are engaged ceases.

The regulations stressed the necessity for the detectives "to work in harmony with the uniformed men of the department:"

They shall see that due credit is given to those who give information that may lead to the arrest of guilty parties or the recovery of property...They shall give due credit in their reports and upon the arrest book to the uniformed men who aid them.

In working with the uniformed branch of the department quietness and discretion must be the rule and friction and bad feeling avoided.

To emphasize the difference between the new Bureau and the old, the term "detective" was dropped on July 11, 1911, and replaced by "Inspector," a term borrowed from Scotland Yard. The semantic justification for the change was that criminal investigators do not detect crime, but do inspect evidence at the scene after a crime has been committed. (It has also been suggested that a contributing factor to the change of title was the poor reputation of private detectives at that time.) In any case, Inspector became an honored title in the Department and remained so for decades.*

The Bureau of Criminal Identification

In September, 1907 Chief Wilson recommended that the Department be provided with funds to "install the Bertillon and finger-print systems for the identification of criminals." Seven months later, in April, 1908, the Bureau of Identification came into operation as the depository for the Department's dossiers on known criminals and as the center for systematic record keeping on an entirely new scale. Intended to cooperate with the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, it was placed under the command of the Captain of Inspectors.

Among the first officers assigned to the Bureau of Identification was Inspector Harry H. Caldwell. He became a recognized expert on scientific

*The rank of Inspector was phased out in the Department-wide reorganization of 1955. Bob Thrasher, the last Inspector on active service, retired on August 20, 1977.

methods of identification and was one of the founders of the International Association for Criminal Identification. (The Association's first meeting took place at the Poodle Dog Cafe in Oakland, October 9, 1915.) He served as its president from 1915 to 1922, and as president of its California Division from 1923 to 1925.*

In a reminiscent mood, Inspector Caldwell told an interviewer in 1920 that, when he was assigned to the Bureau, it occupied "a dark little closet in the old city hall," and was equipped with "a few cigar boxes, an old ledger and pen and ink." He had a few criminal records, written on "the backs of old business and election cards," and nine photographs of criminals.

He built a small cabinet with twenty-six small pigeon holes to contain the cigar boxes. In these, he began an alphabetical file of arrest records. He pasted the photographs in the old ledger.

From these modest beginnings developed what, in 1920, the San Francisco Examiner described as "the great bureau...known today throughout the United States as one of the most complete identification bureaus in the world."

In the early days the Bureau filed fingerprints, photographs, and Bertillon System records.

The Bertillon System was an early application of science to criminology. Invented in 1879 by Alphonse Bertillon, it was adopted by the Paris police in 1882 and the New York Police Department in 1896. The system was based on the assumption that after reaching physical maturity no two human beings have identical bone structure. The system was applied by taking eleven specially coded measurements of an offender's body; from these, he could be identified in the future. In rare instances, however, it was found that persons were arrested who had the same measurements as others already on record. Bertillon measurements were almost unique, and this was the defect which eventually caused the system to be abandoned.

But within limits, Bertillonage worked well in identifying recidivists. On April 13, 1911, for example, Caldwell matched the measurements of a "William Smith," who had been arrested in Oakland, with those of one William Searcy, who was wanted in Los Angeles. When Captain Petersen confronted "Smith" with Caldwell's results, Searcy confessed his identity.

*Inspector Caldwell was born January 13, 1872. Appointed to the Department in 1903, he served as a patrolman for two years before becoming a detective. On July 10, 1912 he was promoted to Assistant Inspector, and promoted to Inspector on March 1, 1913. He was placed temporarily in charge of the Bureau of Identification on December 12, 1919, and permanently in charge on June 7, 1920. In all, he served in the Bureau of Identification for 24 years. He retired February 1, 1932, and died August 5, 1957.



Fourteenth and Broadway, 1911



Looking North on Broadway, 1911



Key Route Inn, 22nd and Broadway, ca. 1912

The Bureau of Identification's formidable capacity to collate information from many sources is shown by the following "wanted" notice:

Wanted for grand larceny and violating probation from superior court for burglary. Lee Guiar, age 21 years, height 5 feet 4 inches, weight about 130 pounds, brown eyes, medium complexion, medium build. Oakland photo No. 3866, Bertillon: 61.6; 66.5; 87.0; 19.2; 15.1; 13.1; 5.7; 26.1; 10.8; 8.4; 44.3. Finger print 9-3, R-- -: 00-0:14. Hired following described rig, and drove into Contra Costa County and has not returned: Horse, weight 1000 pounds, black buggy with red gear, side spring, top, black harness.

According to the Annual Report for 1914, the Bureau of Identification possessed 28,000 Bertillon cards, 17,600 sets of fingerprints, and 120,750 photographs. By 1920, when Bertillonage was becoming obsolete, the Bureau had 100,000 sets of fingerprints, and 40,000 Bertillon cards.

Fingerprinting, a newer system of identification, superseded Bertillonage because fingerprints are truly unique identifiers and, when found at the scene of a crime, can be used as evidence. Oakland was the first police department west of Chicago to maintain specialized fingerprint files and it became the Western center for training on how to use them.

With the support of Chief Wilson and his successors, the Bureau of Identification began exchanging criminal records with departments from the Canadian to the Mexican borders, making Oakland a central clearance bureau for Western criminal records -- a significant accomplishment at a time when police agencies did not have national or regional systems for the exchange of information. Eventually the Bureau acquired more than 400,000 criminal records -- a number far beyond its capacity to manage efficiently. In the 1920s, when the State of California established its own identification bureau, Oakland helped to establish it on a firm footing by transferring many files to Sacramento.*

Gambling

During the Progressive Era, articulate citizen's groups, animated by the perception of evil conditions, mounted major national campaigns for moral reform. The reformers sought to eliminate gambling, prostitution, and alcoholic beverages.

Large numbers of people disagreed with the reformers -- either articulately, on principle, or inarticulately, by simply refusing to change their behavior. To put it in the simplest terms, some activities looked upon by reformers as sinful were considered by others as innocent pleasures. Because

*The Bureau of Identification ceased to operate when its records were combined with those of the Sheriff's Department to form the Alameda County Central Identification Bureau, which officially began operation in 1973.

the issues were stated in moral terms, absolute solutions were demanded, disagreements were hard to resolve, and much bad feeling resulted.

When reformers translated their beliefs into legislation, the sins of their fellow citizens became crimes.

So it happened that, despite the many beneficial measures enacted during the Progressive Era, police departments were required to enforce sumptuary laws for which there was no consensus in the communities they served.

Where there was no moral consensus on an issue, enforcement became a difficult problem in discretionary decision making. When a vice crusade was underway, police chiefs had to balance the expenditure of resources necessary to enforce a particular law against a department's obligation to carry out its other functions efficiently. Individual officers faced similar problems on their beats.

Conflict between reformers and the police arose most often over differences of opinion as to how much effort should be put into the enforcement of "morals" laws. Reformers invariably called for strict enforcement, and were sometimes too ready to interpret disagreement as dishonesty. The police naturally resented such criticism. On the other hand, discretion was sometimes abused, and varying degrees of corruption did exist.

The first of these issues to surface in Oakland was the question of gambling.

The laws on gambling were clear, both in the statutes and in the police regulations. Section 330 P.C., Prohibited Games, banned a multitude of games -- including faro, monte, roulette, fan-tan, stud-horse poker, hokey-pokey, and "any banking, or percentage game played with cards, dice, or any device for money." Section 319 P.C., Lottery, made "Every person who sets up, contrives, prepares, proposes or draws any lottery" guilty of an offense. This section was supplemented by an OMC section which prohibited the sale or possession of lottery tickets. The Municipal Code also prohibited Keno.

All gambling offenses were misdemeanors.

Section 335 P.C. required "every peace officer [to] inform against and diligently prosecute persons who they have reasonable cause to believe have violated any of the provisions in relation to gambling."* Failure to do so was a misdemeanor.

Balanced against this array of laws was the fact that under local option, certain forms of gambling were legal. In Oakland, draw poker and other games were licensed and played in private "card rooms" which were often

*These Penal Code Sections are, of course, still in force. Section 319 has been renumbered as Section 320.

located above saloons and restaurants. Gambling, so long as it stayed within the law, was perfectly legal.

Though restricted by law and rigidly condemned by many citizens of Oakland, gambling was a flourishing business. There were members of every social class and race who enjoyed an occasional flutter. The Chinese, in particular, had a reputation as inveterate gamblers. "In China," as Eve Armentrout Ma notes in Oakland's Chinese, Unsung Builders, "gambling was a popular pastime, where it was not considered particularly immoral."

The "gambling problem," from the Department's point of view, arose with the games which were not authorized by law. Gamblers had a persistent impulse to play the forbidden games. Because it was a surreptitious, under-the-counter, back-room activity, the full extent of illegal gambling will never be known. From all indications, it was substantial.

Illegal lotteries were especially popular with the Chinese, but many non-Chinese also purchased lottery tickets -- including people who thought it wrong to play cards. According to Ma's Oakland's Chinese, the lotteries, which had day and night drawings, were very much like Keno:

In the lotteries the gambler chose no more than ten Chinese characters on a ticket printed with 80 characters. These 80 characters were the first ten lines of a famous Chinese classic called the "1000-Character Classic." In order to win money, at least five characters on the gambler's ticket had to be among the 20 winning characters chosen for that day.

Recent critics of the moral reformers in the Progressive Era tend to disparage their attack on gambling. But it remains true that the gamblers prospered mainly at the expense of the poorest of the poor, workers who dreamed that by buying a lottery ticket or drawing a run of good cards, they could, with a single stroke, escape from a life of grinding labor and heart-breaking poverty. The crusade against gambling included gambling in any form, legal or illegal, and it developed strong support in Oakland.

By 1906 the leadership of the Department had concluded that illegal gambling, at any rate, was getting out of hand. Chief Wilson launched a major, sustained assault on it. According to Municipal Justice In The Melting Pot,

Between 1906 and 1910, police on 163 separate occasions arrested a total of 4,159 persons in gambling raids that netted ten or more persons each...The gambling crackdown reached its peak in 1908, when 1,073 persons were arrested -- 10.8% of all arrests made in Oakland that year.

Oakland detectives were responsible for planning and executing gambling raids...Because gambling was conducted in places with lookouts to warn of raids, police at times wore disguises, climbed

fences and scaled roofs to maintain the element of surprise. They sometimes broke down doors with axes, and in one case an enterprising detective, disguised as a tramp, thrust a long pole into an open doorway to prevent lookouts from closing a specially-reinforced door.

A complicating factor in the gambling issue was the somewhat divided attitude of the City government toward the burden of enforcement. On the one hand, illegal gambling was a crime which should not be tolerated; on the other, with the existing machinery of government, it seemed to be impossible to eradicate. When the Police Court required gamblers to be tried, the trials were time consuming, forcing postponement of more serious cases, and juries frequently refused to convict. When gamblers were cited and forfeited bail in lieu of trial, a tacit plea of guilty was obtained.

Bail was set at \$100, but the accused were released on payment of half the sum, making a forfeiture of \$50 in each case. In many cases this was not a high enough fine to serve as a deterrent. Part of the forfeitures went to meet the expenses of the Police Court, and part went to the City's general fund.* It is estimated that the City acquired as much as \$50,000 per year from this source.

Gradually, over a period of fifty years, the City government appears to have fallen into the habit of relying on these bail forfeitures as a regular part of its income. That this was accepted as routine by many officials, and that no qualms were felt about it, is indicated by a casual reference to gambling raids in a letter written on September 18, 1908, by Captain Petersen to Chief Wilson, who was then on a brief vacation:

Your postal card arrived all right and from the looks of the water in that big tank it would almost tempt anybody to want a swim. Everything is going smoothly here, many people are inquiring about you and all say...they hope you will have a good time and come back refreshed in body and mind. As I am writing, the sound of falling lumber reaches my ears and I know that Captain Lynch and his Chinatown squad have been down taking in a few more Chinese to help grease the wheels of the administration.

Nothing big is happening and only a few cheap thefts are being reported, but many strangers are in town and...the race track will be opened soon with many big strings of horses, so that will not make our labors any the lighter.

*In the 1860s the Police Court was a part-time function of City Government. By 1900 this was no longer true. In 1913, a reformer wrote, "The idea that the police courts must pay their own way by fines and forfeitures on such cases as gambling and female vagrancy and lotteries must be displaced by the modern idea that the courts shall be paid for out of the taxes of the city, and must do their work independently of the idea that they have revenue getting as one of their functions."

In 1911 lawyers for lottery dealers alleged that they had made an agreement with city officials (specifically, the Commissioner of Public Health and Safety) "by which the lotteries were permitted to run, only to be raided several times a month when the city was in need of some bail money."

Policy on police raids was set without consulting lottery dealers, and while such a policy could have been adopted, it would have been unnecessary to consult the dealers about it. There there is no reason to doubt the indignant denial of this claim by Commissioner Turner, who wrote, in a public letter,

As to the alleged agreement, I will state that if there ever was such an agreement it was made without my knowledge or consent, expressed or implied, and that my voice has ever been and ever will be raised against using the police department as an adjunct to the Tax Collector's office for collecting 'licenses' for illegal operations.

As gambling became an important issue, there were rumors that police officers had been bought and that gamblers were being protected. There is evidence to show that corruption did exist on a small scale, but most of it comes from the public record of the Department's own internal investigations. When evidence was found, disciplinary procedures were instituted. Officers were generally transferred from one beat to another to remove them from temptation, or dismissed from the Department, as the facts seemed to warrant. Friedman and Percival's The Roots of Justice, a major study of law enforcement in Alameda County from 1870 through 1910, concludes that while some Oakland police officers "winked" at gambling, there is "no hard evidence of deeper or wider corruption."

Gambling was a particularly sensitive issue in the policing of Chinatown. In 1906, for example, two officers were discharged after admitting they accepted money "as a gift" from a man they later arrested as a gambler. The gambler complained that he had been treated badly. The officers admitted accepting the gratuity, but denied understanding that it was offered for "protection." The gambler, in the opinion of many observers, was simply following the customs of mainland China, where it was customary to pay an "unofficial" tax to local officials for permission to operate. A newspaper editorial on the case suggested that the gambler was an honest man by his own lights, and that the officers were knaves.

It is remotely possible that the two officers did actually misunderstand the nature of the transaction. Offers could be delicately phrased. On December 24, 1919, for example, the Chinese gambler said by some to be the czar of the lotteries, sent the following note to Captain Petersen's home:

My dear Mr. Petersen:

Please accept enclosed as a compliment of the season from

Very truly yours,

萬利夜廠

MAN LEE NIGHT TIME



A Chinese Lottery Ticket with 80 Characters

272 Seventh St. Oakland Cal.
December 24th 1919.

Mr. W. J. Petersen
366 Clifton Ave.
Oakland - Cal.

My dear Mr. Petersen:

I enclose as
a compliment of the season from
Very truly yours

A Letter to Captain Petersen

This text might not have been sufficient basis for a prosecution, but Petersen had no doubt as to what was intended. He replied from his office in the Bureau of Criminal Investigation as follows:

Sir:

I am in receipt of a communication dated December 24th 1919 inclosing a \$100 bill which appears to be sent by you to me as a Christmas present. Inasmuch as I do not know you and I only accept presents from friends of mine who cannot have any ulterior motive, I return herewith the bill you sent, with the suggestion that you send it to those who you have done business [with] before, I not being one of that number.

W.J. Petersen,
Captain of Inspectors

On the whole, the City government, and the Department, appears to have regarded gambling as an inevitable human failing, not to be condoned or encouraged, but to be endured and controlled by the methods of governance which were available.

At the core of the gambling issue was a prolonged conflict of mores which has been eased by the passage of time. The attitude of the majority of Californians toward gambling has become less intensely antagonistic. According to Lawrence Sherman's Scandal and Reform, the old lotteries declined, as the Chinese were assimilated and "the demand for ethnically based gambling declined." Even so, a reformer from the Progressive Era might be shocked to find that a State lottery was passed by initiative in 1984, and that a leading local newspaper uses a Keno game to build its circulation.

The Tongs

In Oakland: The Story of a City, Beth Bagwell described the Chinese as "the first Oakland ethnic group to move into the 'inner city' neighborhoods," and wrote, "it is probably fair to say in the matter of treatment of the Chinese, Oakland was a mirror of the rest of California." The attitude of the police reflected that of the majority community, which was a low-grade xenophobia.

The Chinese encountered discrimination in housing and employment. Nevertheless, they had rights which were legally enforceable. They could, and did, go to court when they felt that a contract had been breached or that they had been improperly treated by police officers. Gambling raids in Chinatown, as elsewhere in the City, required search warrants.

In China for many centuries the people had formed unofficial associations to solve problems not addressed by the civil government. There were also secret societies, some organized to overthrow oppressive rulers, and others to further criminal enterprises. (The Boxers, who dedicated them-

selves to cleansing China of foreigners in 1900, were the only Chinese secret society most Westerners knew about.) Ritual often gave these groups a religious sanction. In the United States, this tradition took a new form with the development of the tongs.

"Tong" is the Chinese word for "hall" or "meeting place," and tongs functioned as social clubs, benevolent associations, credit unions, and trade or craft guilds. They were particularly important to what was known as "the bachelor society," the unmarried young men who were isolated from the support given by the strong Chinese family structure.

But the tongs had a more sinister side, because they incorporated aspects of the criminal secret societies. The rackets associated with the tongs were gambling, prostitution, female slavery, drugs (especially opium), and extortion. The tongs fought each other for control of the rackets. Hatchetmen, also known as highbinders, were assassins who served as the "soldiers" in the so-called tong wars.

Many of the tongs were national in scope and firmly established in every large Chinatown. Tong wars bubbled fitfully for years, rising to a particularly high level of violence around 1909, declining thereafter, until the mid-1920s when the last large scale tong war erupted. During a tong war, according to Ivan Light, in "From Vice District to Tourist Attraction: The Moral Career of America's Chinatowns," everyone who could (including the Chinese) stayed away from Chinatown "out of fear for their lives."

Legitimate Chinese businessmen were often compelled to belong to tongs, and, if they were prosperous and well-known within the community, found that they -- and their wives and children -- became targets for the highbinders. Because the tongs depended on vice for their incomes, moreover, their effects were baneful even in the lulls between wars.

According to Light, the downfall of the tongs began when Chinese merchants sought protection from tong gunmen and "turned increasingly to the municipal police...[who provided]...an armed power in Chinatown capable of suppressing the criminal gunmen." Eventually the tongs abandoned crime and their members also became legitimate merchants.

When a tong war broke out in San Francisco, its effects were quickly felt in Oakland. At such times, the Department increased the Chinatown detail. Tong murders in Oakland were usually solved, but occasionally a highbinder escaped to the East Coast or was spirited out of the country.

Part of the reason the tongs flourished was the language barrier -- which some Oakland officers referred to as "the bamboo curtain." To surmount this, the Department employed Gam Gee, a Chinese resident of Berkeley, as an interpreter. He was the first known member of a minority group to be employed by the Department, and may also have been the first employee of the Department allowed to live outside the City limits. (A long standing Departmental rule stated that, "All persons connected with the police department

shall reside within the City of Oakland.")

Gam Gee was officially assigned to the police court as an interpreter, but from the late 1880s until well into the twentieth century, he divided his time between the courts and Department, which called for his assistance when conducting investigations in Chinatown and when there were rumors of impending tong wars.*

Melrose Station

Until the Department was centralized in the 1950s it operated a number of district sub-stations. Some were opened briefly and closed when no longer needed. Others became permanent and even acquired degrees of autonomy from headquarters downtown. These stations reflected the qualities of their commanding officers. To many residents of the City -- and to many officers -- the Northern Station or the Melrose Station was the police department.



Melrose Station, East 14th and 47th Avenue, in 1910
(Captain Brown is fifth from the right.)

*On February 8, 1963, Chester Young became Oakland's first Chinese police officer; in 1968 he became the Department's first Chinese Sergeant.

In December, 1909, after the residents of the town of Melrose voted to become part of Oakland, Chief Wilson sent Sergeant Thorvald Brown and nine officers to begin police patrols in the new district. They established themselves in a rented storefront on East 14th Street near 47th Avenue, and it became the first Melrose Station. Subsequently the Melrose Station (later known as Eastern Station) moved to 45th and Bond Streets.

Captain Brown was appointed to the Department in 1900 as a substitute officer. He became a regular patrolman in 1902, was promoted to Sergeant in 1907, and became a Captain in 1910. He spent most of his career at Melrose Station. By the time he retired in 1944 at the age of 70, the Melrose Station had a complement of sixty officers.

Widows and Orphans Aid Association

In the nineteenth century and through most of the first decade of the twentieth, there was no systematic method for providing assistance to the wives and children of officers killed in the line of duty. When such a tragedy occurred, Oaklanders turned to the volunteer tradition to express their concern, and individuals almost always stepped forward to conduct benefits and take up collections. These gestures expressed a sincere desire to lighten the burden of police families.

In January, 1908, for example, after Officer James Fenton was slain while arresting a thief in West Oakland, the black community sponsored a benefit for his wife and children. Link Dennis, spokesman for the benefit, wrote that Fenton's death had,

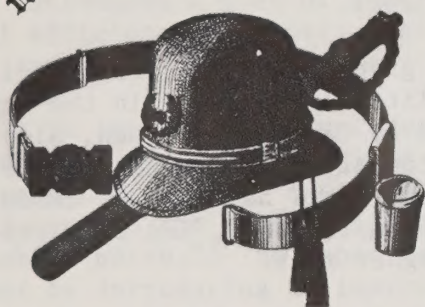
brought grief to the colored citizens and business men of West Oakland. He was a strict and dutiful patrolman, who in the pursuit of his duty, administered it without respect of color or kind...[we] appreciate... what impartiality on the part of an officer means, and Officer James Fenton was impartial and fair...we hope to show...sympathy with the sorrowing widow and infant children of the lamented officer, by tendering them a deserved testimonial, which we hope will be substantial.

But for several years members of the Department had felt the need for a more efficient way of helping the families. On February 1, 1908, soon after Officer Fenton's death, the Widows and Orphans Aid Association was established. Because, according to Roderick Petersen's Narrative History,

...collections were oftentimes very inadequate, the members of the Department formed themselves into an association whereby each would pay a small sum every month into a common fund upon which to draw for a specified amount of money to assist the survivors of a deceased police officer. This association was incorporated under the laws of the State of California and has since been widely copied by other police departments.

First Annual Ball
OF THE

Widows' and Orphans'

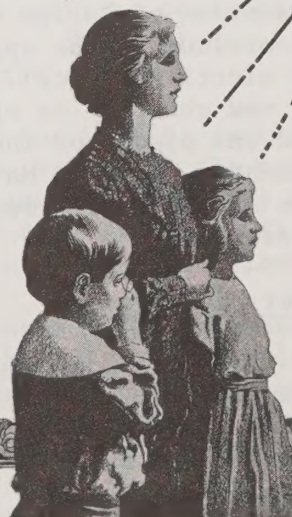


Aid Association

O. P. D.

Piedmont Pavilion
October 12th, 1909

EIGHTH ANNUAL BALL
benefit of the
Widows and Orphans
Aid Association
of the
Oakland Police Department



Oakland
Municipal Auditorium
Tuesday Evening
October 12, 1920

Programs from Early Annual Balls

From its earliest days the Association enjoyed the sincere and responsible involvement of community members, and its fund raising events were generously supported. The Widows and Orphans Aid Association continues to provide assistance and moral strength to the families of Department members.

Civil Service Reform - 1911

In terms of the internal history of the Department, one of the most important events of Chief Wilson's administration was the extension of civil service status (which already protected other municipal employees) to police officers when the City adopted the Charter of 1911.

The authority over hiring and promotions granted to the Civil Service Commission was hailed as ending the era of political patronage in the Department. The new regulations, which were written by Captain Petersen, also provided that candidates would have to pass standardized examinations to become eligible for appointment, that promotions would be based on demonstrated commitment to duty and professional accomplishment, and that promotions would be from the lower to the next higher rank.

Once adopted, this reform proved so successful that it has never been abandoned, but it did not immediately remove the Department from politics.

The position of Police Chief was excluded from the civil service system. The Chief continued to be appointed by the Commissioner of Public Health and Safety (an elective office). New commissioners had the prerogative of appointing new chiefs. An officer chosen as Chief retained his civil service rating, and was placed on indefinite leave of absence to assume command of the Department. When the Mayor and the Commissioner of Public Health and Safety were at odds, political conflict still had an impact on the leadership of the Department.

Chief Walter J. Petersen*

Chief Wilson resigned due to ill health on September 5, 1912. He was succeeded on October 1 by Walter J. Petersen, who, under the new civil service rules, retained his rating as Captain while being placed on indefinite leave to serve as head of the Department. Merritt's History of Alameda County says of him:

Petersen gained his reputation as Captain of Detectives...He took hold of the Detective Bureau with the firm resolution of maintaining

*Chief Petersen (March 14, 1869 - October 9, 1958) was appointed to the Department as a patrolman on December 26, 1895, promoted to Sergeant on January 12, 1898, and Captain on June 7, 1899. On October 1, 1907, he became Captain of Detectives, a title later changed to Captain of Inspectors. He left the Department on October 7, 1922.

high standards. He was of invaluable service to Chief Wilson in placing this branch on a thoroughly scientific basis.

Chief Petersen was widely respected within law enforcement circles; Berkeley's Chief Vollmer, for example, believed Petersen knew more about practical police work than any man he had ever met. The new Chief was destined, however, to become a very controversial figure.

Like Chief Wilson, with whom he had worked closely, Chief Petersen was the type of police official described by historians as a "civic reformer." He introduced a host of changes designed to improve the Department's technical efficiency, and persuaded the City Council to pass record setting budgets to implement them.*

To improve response time in answering calls for service, he restructured the three old districts into five new ones. Central, Northern, and Melrose became Central Day, Central Night, Western, Northern, and Eastern. (Officers referred to the northern district as "the fog belt," and the eastern as "the rhubarb patch.") He supported the resulting redeployment of men and equipment by introducing an improved communications system which included "a complete telephone and telegraph system, a dictaphone for sending messages to various stations in multiple...and a system of lights over the call boxes to signal patrolmen on their beats." The dictaphone recordings could be played through the switchboard to the callboxes, thus enabling emergency information to be sent to many beat officers simultaneously. This was praised as "the most perfect system...in America and possibly the world."

He authorized the first motorcycle detail for traffic control; this became the core of the Traffic Bureau. He also sponsored the installation of electronic traffic semaphores (invented by Sergeant Jack Sherry and Wagon Officer Joseph Wallman) to improve downtown traffic control. The semaphores were operated by officers standing in the center of intersections.

In 1914 he ordered the adoption of uniforms modeled on those of the New York Police Department and brought an end to the "antiquated helmets," replacing them with "new caps of modern appearance." He directed that space be allocated in each of the station houses for gymnasiums to improve the physical fitness of the officers and for classrooms to be used as "police schools."

One of the most enduring of the changes introduced by Chief Petersen was the arrest report. From the earliest days of the Department, officers booking prisoners made out a "meager reports...concerning the facts" on

*He would have denied that his professional standards were merely "civil." The terms "moral" and "civil" reformers are, of course, analytical and intended to distinguish two approaches to the social problems of seventy years ago.

miscellaneous slips of paper. He introduced the requirement that reports be prepared which specified the events leading up to the arrest, the names and addresses of witnesses, and the actions taken by the officer. Each report was prepared in duplicate, with one copy going to the prosecutor's office for use in court, and the other being sent to the Chief for review before being filed with the officer's records.

Saloons and Prostitution

The Progressive Era campaign against the vices of alcohol and prostitution reached Oakland in 1912. It manifested itself, according to one newspaper, as a "crusade against the downtown dance hall and...disorderly road houses and other social evils."

The City's administration believed it ran a "clean" town and could withstand a fair-minded scrutiny. Of course, it was not willing to be seen as defending immorality, so its initial impulse was to accommodate the reformers by tightening regulations where it seemed reasonable to do so. Because this meant changes in the enforcement of local ordinances, the Chief of Police became a spokesman for the administration.

On taking office, Chief Petersen announced that he intended to prepare stricter rules "for the conduct of cafes and saloons...and the segregated district." (Officials preferred the term "segregated district" to "red light district.") At the same time, though, he stated his support for the City's existing policies as the best way to deal with these matters.

Initially, this position received wide support. Oakland's saloon ordinance was described by one observer as "one of the most drastic in the country, and...very commendably enforced and obeyed." (Among other things, it forbade "private rooms and curtained alcoves.") The segregated district was thought to keep "the social evil" within bounds. All the "landladies" were registered and the district was said to be well regulated. At that time, with a population of about 200,000 people, Oakland had 450 saloons and 31 brothels.*

The City's reform groups vigorously disagreed with these views, and in response to their demands, on August 23, 1912, the City Council appointed the Public Welfare and Censorship Committee (soon known simply as "the Vice Commission"), and authorized it to examine conditions in the City.

While the official committee proceeded with its work, the "unofficial" ones continued their activities, and the crusade gathered momentum.

*Today, with a population of approximately 351,000 people, Oakland has 99 bars and 111 restaurants with full liquor licenses. In addition, there are 849 other premises licensed for various types of traffic in alcoholic beverages.



Captain Lynch, Mayor Mott, and Chief Petersen,
During the Annual Inspection, May 1, 1914



Chief Petersen Talks Things Over With Kelly's Army.

In 1914, with mutual aid from the Berkeley and Emeryville Police Departments and the Alameda County Sheriff's Office, the Department escorted this IWW "army of the unemployed" into Contra Costa County without violence. Estimated at from 700 to 2000 men, Kelly's Army later rioted in Richmond.

A "civic purity" group called for an ordinance against "rag dancing" and police officers were detailed to view exhibitions of the Bunny Hug and the Grizzly Bear. They disappointed the reformers by deciding that the dances were innocuous. The reformers appealed directly to the City Council and, despite opposition from the musician's union, the ordinance was passed.

The debate on the "rag dance" ordinance had moments of low comedy (as when two Council members demonstrated the "Texas Tommy" to Mayor Mott) but there was nothing amusing about the uproar caused by J. C. Westenberg, the leader of the "California Federation for the Suppression of Vice."

The "Federation" traveled from city to city, and charged admission to its meetings. In Oakland, Westenberg led attempts to disrupt saloons, and in his newspaper, "The Public Eye," asserted that Chief Petersen, Mayor Mott, several members of the City Council, and former Chief Wilson, were guilty of "graft and the protection of crime."

Westenberg was arrested for violating City ordinances and Chief Petersen charged him with criminal libel. Westenberg was convicted and sentenced to two months in the City Prison, "with no alternative of a fine." A reporter wrote that his sentence "was considered very light in view of the fact that he admitted on the witness stand that he knew when he wrote the articles that the statements he was making were untrue." Even so, some reform groups looked on Westenberg as a martyr. He added more heat than light to Oakland's self-examination.

While these diversions were under way, the reform movement achieved a broad consensus on its objectives. Reformers agreed there were too many saloons in Oakland, especially in residential areas, and that many were ignoring the law against serving underage minors. They called for reduction of saloons from 450 to 200, and for lifting the license of any place that sold liquor to minors. These demands commended themselves to many residents of the City, but were opposed by the saloon owners who had been operating honestly and who feared being put out of business for no fault of their own. They were joined by people who saw such restrictions as a first step toward prohibition.

The administration, bound to listen to both sides, sought a middle ground. In addressing a large reform meeting, Chief Petersen reminded the audience "that at their largest the organizations represented here tonight do not represent all or nearly all the elements that go to make up a great and complex city...public officials are elected to represent all of the people, the whole community, and not one particular part of it." At the same meeting, E. H. Hart, the Vice-President of the State Federation of Labor, spoke in support of Petersen. The meeting took their remarks as favoring the "saloonists."

Extreme reformers demanded that the license of any saloon which sold liquor to a minor once, knowingly or not, be revoked. There were angry protests that this was unfair. Still seeking a middle ground, Chief Petersen

said to a meeting of the "Law and Order League," "I am for the square deal." If it could be proved that certain saloons were "habitual violators of the law" he "would be the first to recommend against them," but he felt that some of the saloons attacked by the reformers were "not places of an evil character," and should not be put out of business.

The next day a leading reformer called Petersen a "champion of vice."

Ultimately, the reformers did win a reduction in the number of licensed saloons, and this was, effectively, a first step toward prohibition.

Prostitution appeared in Oakland at least as early as the 1860s, and like gambling, was a misdemeanor which presented an intractable problem. Although the laws against it dated from the earliest days of the State, it was a common offense and the Department's limited manpower made enforcement sporadic. In the 1890s, apparently, the City decided to follow the example of other California cities and control the problem by allowing the formation of a "segregated district" where brothels were tolerated, provided they abided by a system of rules enforced by the police department.

By 1913 this compromise was being reconsidered throughout the State. When challenged for tolerating the segregated district, the administration did not attempt to defend prostitution, but did attempt to explain its attitude toward the expedient which had been adopted. Commissioner Turner said,

This matter is directly in my charge. I am responsible. When I went into office it appeared to be the consensus of public opinion that the segregated district was a necessary evil and that the law in this regard might best be allowed to remain in abeyance. This was not my opinion and I believe that the law should be enforced. But I bowed to public opinion while studying the matter...Chief Petersen agrees with the opinion of a majority of the police authorities of the United States that the segregated district is a 'practical, necessary evil'...but stands ready to close the district if ordered to do so.

Commissioner Turner was reported as having been brought to the edge of a nervous breakdown by the difficulty of the issue. This was still the age of the double standard, and he hesitated to make a decision which, in the prevailing view, put good women at risk.

During the debate, reformers made stringent attacks on "fallen women" as sources of corruption. In responding to this, Chief Petersen suggested condemnation of prostitutes should be tempered to some degree by Christian charity, and that, at the very least, their customers shared responsibility for the "social evil." He ventured, as his personal opinion, that, "nature intended or designed [man] as a polygamous animal" even though "Christian countries have wisely and properly put polygamy under the ban." Reformers denounced these statements as radical and held them against him for years.

When the Vice Commission issued a report indicating that enforcement of liquor laws in the segregated district was lax, Chief Petersen ordered the sale of liquor stopped.

But the consensus of public opinion was changing. In March, 1913, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed a Red Light Abatement Bill. This was opposed in a referendum sponsored by the "Anti-Abatement and Referendum League" and the "Property Owners' Protective Association." When the legislation was placed on the ballot in November, 1914, the voters approved it, and the Red Light Abatement Act became effective in December, 1914.

On October 3, 1913, well before the election confirmed what the Legislature had done, Commissioner Turner ordered Oakland's segregated district to be closed, effective midnight December 31, 1914. According to a newspaper report, he made the decision "somewhat reluctantly, as it meant a revolutionary change in an old and established policy which had apparently worked well, but...he felt that the law must be enforced."

Chief Petersen carried out the order, and the district was closed in a civil and orderly manner. The various madames were advised to leave town and given time to make their arrangements. In November, 1913, one who moved to San Francisco wrote to Chief Peterson as follows,

I was treated with courtesy by Chief White and also other officials and take possession tomorrow at 736 Commercial St. at 1 o'clock and I wish to thank you kindly for your kindness...I would like to know if I could leave my sister Miss Georgie in charge here and should there be any trouble I shall take the responsibility. I was unable to reach you by phone today otherwise I would have talked to you personally once again thanking you for your kindness.

To which the Chief replied:

Yours of Nov. 27th received and in reply to the same I have to inform you that I have no objections to your sister conducting your Oakland place until the first of the year. Have her call at my office and make the necessary reports.

I am glad that you have located yourself satisfactorily in San Francisco and pleased that you were kindly treated by the officials of that city.

A few places attempted to evade the closure by relocating in other areas of the City, but these were promptly closed. There was a prompt increase in the number of streetwalkers.

In the Annual Report for the following year (July 1, 1914), Chief Petersen wrote:

On Jan. 1st of the present year houses of prostitution were closed in our city after having been in operation for many years...At the present time we have no houses of prostitution operating in this city but we have increased the labors of the police department in controlling conditions concerning sexual desires. It is perhaps too soon to pass judgment upon the value of closing the district and it is sufficient to say that we are giving the matter a fair trial and that the city is and has been closed against public prostitution.

The Report included a table comparing sexual offenses for 1913 and the first six months of 1914. It recorded an increase in certain sex related crimes:

	Rape	Statutory Rape	Prostitution
1913	0	3	1
1914	1	9	39

Although the Chief's letter implied that closure of the segregated houses was in the nature of an experiment, official tolerance has not since been extended to prostitution in Oakland.*

This did not close the issue, however. Chief Petersen was repeatedly accused of favoring prostitution, and this controversy haunted him through the rest of his career. Defending himself in a letter to a civic leader on May 13, 1916, he wrote,

It has been said many times by misinformed persons that I was in favor of a segregated district. This is not true. I have never been in favor of a segregated district. I have said, and I have not changed my mind, that I believe that a segregated district was the best means of controlling prostitution...but notwithstanding my personal views, as an official of the police department I closed the red light district of this city and caused it to remain closed...the red light district will never be opened again if I can prevent it.

When the International Association of Chiefs of Police met at Newark, New Jersey, later in 1916, it appeared likely that Chief Petersen would be the first Westerner chosen President of the Association. But on the evening before the election, copies of a letter signed by an Oakland clergyman were delivered anonymously to many of the delegates. The letter repeated the most severe charges that had been made against the Chief during the controversy over the segregated district, and caused his defeat in the election by a vote of 88 to 79. (Despite this, he was reelected as the Association's First Vice-President.)

*In 1984 there were 1,469 prostitution arrests (male and female) in Oakland; 356 forcible rapes (including statutory rapes) were reported, and 110 arrests were made.

The crusade for moral reform in Oakland followed the pattern that appeared in other American communities. People fought the issues from differing perspectives, and, unhappily, strong antagonisms developed among good people. In pursuing its objectives the reform movement achieved mixed results. Reducing the number of saloons and closing the red light district were clear gains. A decline followed in the rates of drunkenness and alcoholism, which were terrible scourges at the time. Prostitution was (as it still is) a wretched way of life, and venereal diseases had hideous consequences. But these gains were obtained at a price, and there was a question as to whether it was too high. Like other law enforcement officials, Chief Petersen was concerned that the passage of sumptuary laws would undermine the efficiency of the police. In a letter to one of his critics, he wrote, "What makes law of value, anyway? Is it not the public opinion that is behind it, and do you think that police departments or anyone else can make people good...by legislative enactment?"

New Headquarters/New City Hall

Ground was broken for a new city hall on May 10, 1911. Five months later, President Taft and Mayor Mott presided over ceremonies marking the laying of the cornerstone. The building was completed and opened for use in June, 1913.*

The Department's offices at the old City Hall had become wholly inadequate to its needs, but since it was customary to have the Department quartered with the principal city offices, no thought was given to housing the Department in its own building. Instead, a large percentage of space in the new City Hall was earmarked for police use.

The offices of the captains, the lieutenants, the property clerk, and the court bailiffs were on the first floor and directly accessible to the public. The offices of the Chief and the Bureau of Inspectors were on the second floor.

The Bureau of Criminal Identification was on the ninth floor, and on the tenth was a fully equipped hospital for police personnel and prisoners. The hospital boasted a large ward and a number of individual treatment rooms. It had a large, well-lit operating room which was available on a twenty-four hour basis.

The eleventh floor was occupied by the new City Jail, which was clean and well lit, and provided ample space for prisoners. The cells were steel and finished with white enamel. Special locks enabled officers to open cells individually or in groups. Each cell had an overhead electric light, two bunks, a drinking fountain, a toilet, and a writing table. Hot and cold

*City Hall continued to house the Department's main headquarters until December 22, 1962, when the current Police Administration Building opened.



New and Old City Halls: 1913

showers were located at the end of each row of cells. Wags described it as a luxury hotel.

In the basement a gymnasium, shooting range, shower stalls, and meeting rooms were provided for officer training and recreation.

Policewomen and Police Matrons

In June, 1901, during the administration of Chief Hodgkins, the first woman was hired by the Department -- Mrs. Sarah B. Reed, who was assigned to the jail as a matron to look after female prisoners. When Mrs. Reed died in 1904, she was succeeded by her daughter, Mrs. Celia Francis Baxter.* "Mother" Baxter, as she was known, became an important and valued employee. It was evident by 1913 that more than one matron was needed, and in his first annual report, Chief Petersen wrote:

The women's organizations of our city, as well as a natural sense of decency, demand that a matron should be in the women's quarters in the city prison at all times. At the present time we have but one matron, who is trying to work 24 hours a day. So I have requested that two additional matrons be provided.

Los Angeles had appointed a policewoman in 1912, and women's groups in Oakland requested a similar appointment. In response to this, Chief Petersen wrote in the same report:

There is no doubt as to the value of policewomen in a modern police department; but the policewoman must be one of kindly disposition, good judgment and possess rare common sense to meet modern police conditions. The right kind of policewoman will be a great help... but the wrong kind would be a positive detriment...and cause us more trouble than we can imagine. I have recommended the appointment of two policewomen.

Some of the woman's groups demanded that the policewomen not be placed under the authority of the Police Department, and the Council acceded to this. The Women's Protective Bureau was created on December 8, 1913, as an adjunct to the Police Department and the Police Court but placed under the Mayor's office. (Its personnel were never listed on the Departmental roster, as were the Matrons, even though Matrons were technically assigned to the Commissioner of Public Health and Safety.)

*The service record of Mrs. Baxter (January 9, 1860 - June 14, 1925) indicates that she was appointed Police Matron on June 15, 1904, and became Matron of the City Prison on January 31, 1919.

Two women were appointed to the Women's Protective Bureau -- Beatrice A. McCall* (who had been one of the first female probation officers in Alameda County) as Secretary, and Alice Richardson, as Assistant Secretary. The job description said:

The scope of the work in a general way is for the protection of women and children and prevention of crimes against them and to assist women who are brought into the courts, with sympathy and advice. Some of the matters that applicants will be required to be more or less familiar with are crimes against women; probation work; dance hall, saloon, and cafe ordinances as applied to women; lost persons, women or children, and state labor laws.

The Woman's Protective Bureau helped women and children to find medical care, food, and lodging, aided them in dealing with other government agencies (in such matters as obtaining pension rights), and provided an early form of domestic crisis intervention. In the three and a half years of its existence, the Bureau handled more than a thousand cases.

The Woman's Protective Bureau was abolished by Mayor Davie on July 17, 1917, on the grounds that it cost \$5000 per year to run and that its services could more properly be provided by private philanthropic organizations. Some of its functions were assumed by the Matrons and by regular police officers.

Chief William F. Woods**

On July 1, 1915, a new Commissioner of Public Health and Safety, Dr. Frank F. Jackson, chose a new Chief of Police, Lieutenant William F. Woods. The 1916 History of the Department said of Woods,

*Beatrice McCall Whitnah (1881-1973) was an indomitable reformer. She and her husband helped to form the Regional Park System. In her old age she became involved in the anti-war movement. On April 25, 1969, the San Francisco Chronicle reported, "An 87-year old Gold Star mother, tottering on a pair of crutches, pried a metal fallout shelter sign from the face of Oakland's Hall of Justice yesterday...Beatrice Whitnah...was attempting to demonstrate the uselessness of fallout shelters in event of a nuclear war...Oakland police, both uniformed and plainclothes, took pains to ignore Mrs. Whitnah's struggle to remove the sign, some six feet above her head. Uniformed officers carefully crossed the street and plainclothes men smiled slightly and averted their eyes...When the civil defense sign clattered to the sidewalk, Mrs. Whitnah picked it up and hobbled upstairs to present it to Judge Martin. But he had already left his chambers..."

**William F. Woods (June 6, 1867 - January 11, 1932) was appointed to the force on August 13, 1895, promoted to Sergeant on July 1, 1907, and to Lieutenant on July 12, 1912.

He has risen to the highest positions through force of labor, and not through circumstances...for over twelve years [he] patrolled his appointed district, doing good and effective work in preventing crime and apprehending those who violated the law. The lawless gangs who operated in different sections of the city, and particularly the notorious crowd of young fellows who made life miserable for those resident in and around the foot of Market Street, were made to feel the force of Patrolman Woods' iron hand. He drove them from their lairs, harassed them on all sides, and succeeded eventually in capturing them all and disbanding entirely the gang.

Ex-Chief Petersen returned to his position as Captain of Inspectors.

Chief Woods planned to continue the innovative pattern established by Chiefs Wilson and Petersen, and was particularly interested in the development of police schools. His administration was, unfortunately, marked by serious disagreements with Commissioner Jackson as to the management of the Department.

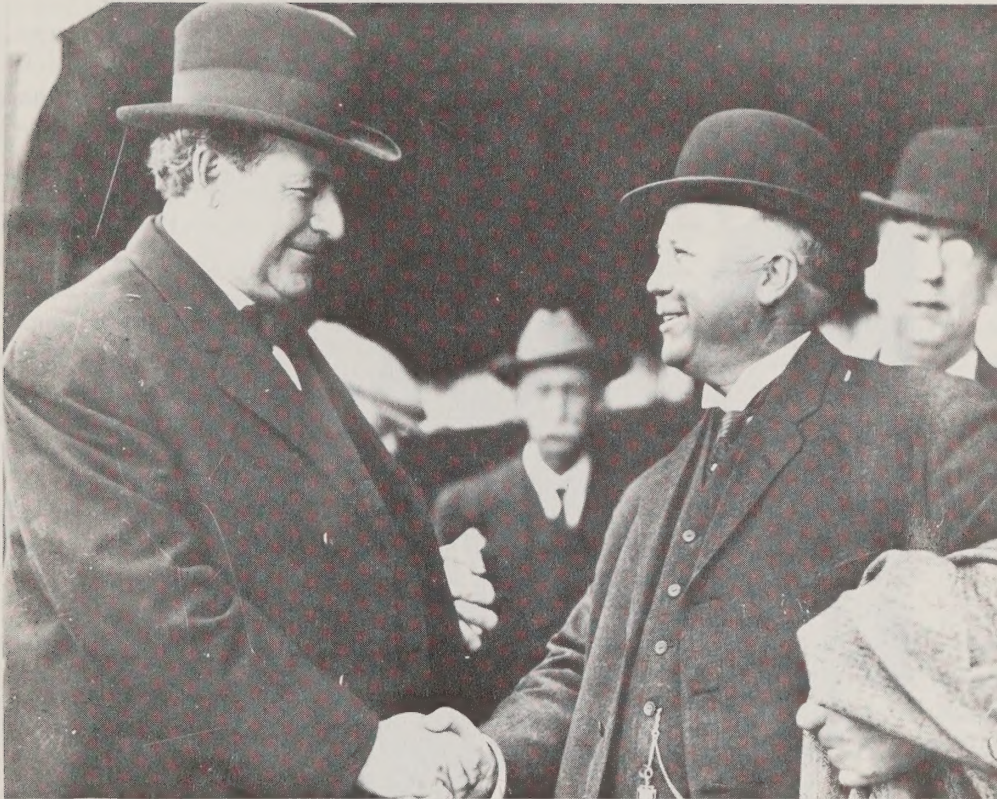
Commissioner Jackson bypassed Chief Woods in making transfers from one beat to another. This caused dissatisfaction within the Department, and undermined the Chief's authority. In protesting this, Chief Woods privately submitted his resignation to the Commissioner twice, the Commissioner refusing it each time. On May 15, 1916, when Chief Woods submitted his third resignation publicly, the Commissioner accepted it.

After his resignation as Chief, Woods was reinstated as a Lieutenant, and continued to serve as a member of the Department for another sixteen years. His experience as Chief was not a happy one, but he does not seem to have been unduly depressed by it. In August, 1917, a local newspaper contained the following report:

Every now and then some of the police officers in charge of the various stations essay something of a literary effort in making their reports to headquarters, but the following from the prolific pen of Lieutenant William F. Woods, formerly chief of police, and now detailed at Northern station, was conceded this morning to be the best thing done so far by any member of the police literati. It is gleaned from Wood's report of last night's occurrences:

'Four arrests were made by Officer J. J. O'Connell, about 3 a.m. The culprits are from Berkeley, the "chemically pure,"* and after a night of revelry, went forth in search of adventure. On reaching San Pablo avenue they bethought themselves of the valiant knight, Don Quixote, and his fierce encounter with the windmill. They sought to emulate the deeds of Cervantes' hero by sporting with the garbage

*Berkeley enacted prohibition on a local ordinance basis in 1907.



Progressive Republican greets Populist Democrat: Mayor Mott welcomes Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan to Oakland. Frank K. Mott served as Mayor of Oakland for 10 Years (1905-1915)

cans placed along the highway between 16th and 67th streets. They distributed all the cans in the center of the street and were intent on their task when the officer arrived to protest. They thereupon chided him, with the result that all four found themselves in durance vile, sadder, and, it is to be hoped, wiser men. They are charged with committing a nuisance, to wit: obstructing a public highway.'

The four heroes of the foregoing account...have all been released.

Following the resignation of Chief Woods, Captain of Inspectors Petersen, as provided by the Charter, became the Acting Chief. On September 18, 1916, Petersen was reappointed as Chief by City Council resolution.



Mayor Davie and President William Howard Taft.
John L. Davie served as Mayor of Oakland for 16 Years
(1915 - 1931)

World War I

In the early days of this century, Oakland residents tended to pay more attention to local affairs than to what was going on elsewhere. In 1914 World War I seemed important but distant. By 1916 it had come considerably closer.

As the war ground on, American opinion began to turn against Germany. Interventionists came to believe that the United States should enter the war against Germany.

But substantial numbers of people, especially in the West, continued to hope the U.S. would stay out of the war. This group included isolationists, pacifists, socialists, pro-Germans, and parts of the labor movement. Those who favored neutrality usually opposed "preparedness" measures (programs designed to strengthen American armed forces), seeing them simply as preliminaries to war.

A feeling of intense anxiety developed, and no one knew what to expect. The famous Tom Mooney case was a sign of the times.

On July 22, 1916, during a "Preparedness Day" parade on Market Street in San Francisco, a bomb exploded which killed ten people and injured many more. Suspicion soon centered on Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, IWW agitators known to have set off bombs in connection with strikes in several Western states. They were arrested and convicted for this atrocious crime. Billings was given a life sentence; Mooney was to be hanged.

At the trial, one of several witnesses who claimed to have seen the defendants at the scene of the bombing was an Oakland resident named Mellie Edeau.

A few days after the bombing she came to City Hall and told her story to Chief Petersen, who sent her to San Francisco, accompanied by Inspector William H. Smith, to see whether she could identify Billings or Mooney. She failed to make an identification, and that seemed to close the matter.

A short time later she said she had been too nervous and excited to identify either suspect. Given another chance by the San Francisco authorities, she did claim to recognize them, and the prosecutor decided to use her as a witness.

After the trial defense lawyers discovered photographs of Mrs. Edeau and her daughter standing beside a clock on Market Street at the exact moment of the explosion -- but almost a mile away from where she said she had been standing when she saw Mooney and Billings.

Inspector Smith, newspaperman Fremont Older, and several of Mooney's lawyers reviewed the Oakland file on Mrs. Edeau and decided to interview her at her home. Chief Petersen was asked to join them. Before he arrived, one of Mooney's lawyers told Mrs. Edeau that she might be charged with perjury. She became extremely agitated and threatened them with a revolver. They disarmed her.

At this point, Chief Petersen arrived. According to Estolv Ward's The Gentle Dynamiter,

...[Petersen's] presence had a remarkable effect; the crazed look left Mrs. Edeau's eyes... Soon the whole lot of them were sitting peacefully in the parlor, with Petersen doing the questioning.

**The United States declared war on April 6, 1917. The Police Bulletin appears to have been delayed three days for inclusion of this Special Order.

The Chief showed his considerable experience with difficult customers, leading Mrs. Edeau backward and forward, time and again, over the discrepancies in her stories. How could she have been in two places four-fifths of a mile apart at the same moment?

"Well, if you want to know," Mrs. Edeau finally explained, "I might have remained in the flesh at Steuart and Market Streets, but the brown eyes of my dead husband led me to 721 Market Street."

"That's not clear to me, Mrs. Edeau," said Chief Petersen. "Please explain it."

"Well, what I mean is, in the flesh I was at Steuart and Market Streets, but my astral body was at the other place. What I testified I seen at 721 Market Street I seen with my astral eyes."

Although Mrs. Edeau subsequently denied making this statement, other testimony in the case was at least as open to question, and Mooney's appeals dragged on for years.*

By 1917 a strong anti-war movement had developed. Candidates ran "against the war." Organizations formed which were prepared to encourage men to resist military service. As the majority opinion hardened against Germany, and war came closer, the propaganda of the neutralists became more strident.

On the other side, some interventionists engaged in ignorant, and even vicious, "vigilante" activities -- especially amateur "detective work" against loyal Americans of German descent. This led to an endless stream of rumors, causing neighbor to suspect neighbor, and contributing to social anxiety, war jitters, and spy mania.

When war came, finally, in April, 1917, Chief Petersen issued the following Special Order on April 3, 1917:**

It will be apparent to all members of this Department that at the present time the welfare of the country may be endangered by the acts of cranks or German sympathizers.

It is my desire that everything that can be done by you with a view of ascertaining any facts, concerning the activity of any person or persons sympathizing with the enemies of the United States, be

*As late as 1938, long after leaving the police service, Chief Petersen testified on the case before a Congressional Committee in Washington. Mooney and Billings were pardoned by Governor Culbert Olson in 1939.

**The United States declared war on April 6, 1917. The Police Bulletin appears to have been delayed three days for inclusion of this Special Order.

reported to this office. You will diligently observe any place in your particular beat or district where persons of suspicious character may meet. You will watch all telegraph manholes, pipe lines, electric lines, gas plants, manufacturing shops and buildings, places where powder or dynamite are stored and do everything in your power as a loyal American citizen to observe and report such cases in a manner that will reflect credit upon those who have a high regard for the nation in its present crisis.

You will be expected to be more diligent than usual and to conduct yourself in a manner that will maintain the peace and quiet of the City of Oakland in particular and the nation at large.

The following extracts from Police Bulletins published in the summer of 1917 give a sense of the initial impact of the war on the Department:

You are hereby ordered to make diligent inquiry on your several beats and ascertain if there are any bodies of men drilling with or without arms, and if so the purpose of such military exercise, the name of the organization, the location and the names of the officers and make a written report to the Chief of Police at once.

You are also ordered to watch diligently all water and power plants and all tunnels on your respective beats.

* * *

AN HONORABLE AMERICAN

It has been rumored on the street that Adolph Schlueter, our well-known merchant, has been arrested and interned as an undesirable German sympathizer. This is erroneous, and I wish to state that he has been a loyal and progressive citizen of the City of Oakland, and of the United States, for the past forty years.

* * *

Members of the Police Department are to use the greatest of diligence in apprehending all persons between the ages of 21 and 31 years who have failed to register, and all those attempting to evade registration. Particular diligence must be practiced in locating any parties who have attempted or do attempt to dissuade parties from registering for the conscription draft, especially those distributing dodgers, letters or circulars. Obtain this information as quietly and secretly as possible, and make immediate report to the Chief of Police.

* * *

I desire to compliment the Police Department for its expression of loyalty in subscribing their share of the Liberty Loan, that was

required for the Government of the United States to carry on the war with our enemies.

The Federal Government was not well prepared to deal with the domestic ramifications of the war. The FBI did not exist. Its predecessor, the Bureau of Investigation, consisted of a mere 300 unarmed agents, and the U.S. Secret Service was quite small. Consequently, an unusual degree of responsibility for what we now think of as Federal functions fell on local police departments. The Attorney General of the United States sent the following message to all police agencies:

Under the Proclamation of the President, dated April 6, 1917, it is unlawful for alien enemies to have in their possession the following articles:

Any firearm, weapon, or implement of war, or component part thereof, ammunition, maxim or other silencer, bomb, or explosive, or material used in the manufacture of explosives; any aircraft or wireless apparatus, or any form of signaling device, or any form of cipher code, or any paper, document, or book written or printed in cipher or in which there may be invisible writing.

Your cooperation in enforcing this Proclamation is earnestly desired; and you are requested, if possible to...notify all alien enemies within your locality to bring to police headquarters and surrender any and all articles which it is unlawful to have in their possession. A detailed receipt should be given for all articles surrendered, and at the close of the war such articles should be returned.

Any alien enemy who fails to surrender such articles within twenty-four hours after public notice given by you will be subject to summary arrest if such articles shall be found in his possession; and the articles will be seized and forfeited to the use of the United States.

Chief Nedderman

The Bulletin of August 28, 1917, announced that J. H. Nedderman had been appointed Chief of Police and that:

W. J. Petersen having tendered his resignation as Chief of Police of the Oakland Police Department the same being accepted, was granted an indefinite leave of absence as Captain of Inspectors, without pay, to serve the Government in the Army, by the Civil Service Board at their regular meeting, held August 14th, to take effect Sept. 1st, 1917.

Chief Petersen was only one of the many Oakland police officers who served in World War I. He helped to organize Battery E of the 143rd Field Artillery (First California Volunteers) but on reaching France he was trans-

ferred to criminal investigation work. Most soldiers from Oakland were members of the 159th, 347th, and 363d Infantry Regiments. They served in many of the major battles of 1918, including the Meuse-Argonne offensive, which broke the Hindenberg Line -- and the German Army.

Throughout the war, Chief Nedderman provided steady leadership for the Department as it coped with unprecedented new problems.*

Wartime Activities

The coming of war did not, of course, mean that the Department's basic role changed. It continued to carry out all of its peacetime functions. To these were added the order-maintenance problems caused by the presence in the City of large numbers of young soldiers and industrial workers, as well as special war-related activities, ranging from parades to extra waterfront patrols and the registration of enemy aliens.

On September 13, 1917, the Department provided an escort for the first group of volunteers to leave Oakland for military service. This was a festive, patriotic gathering which began at City Hall and ended at the 16th Street Station. On October 20, 1917, the Department policed the "Liberty Parade," in which 8,500 Army and Navy personnel marched through downtown. This parade was described as "the most stupendous ever staged in the city." (Although anonymous threats had been made to make it a repetition of the San Francisco Preparedness Day Parade of 1916, "it passed off without a disturbing incident.")

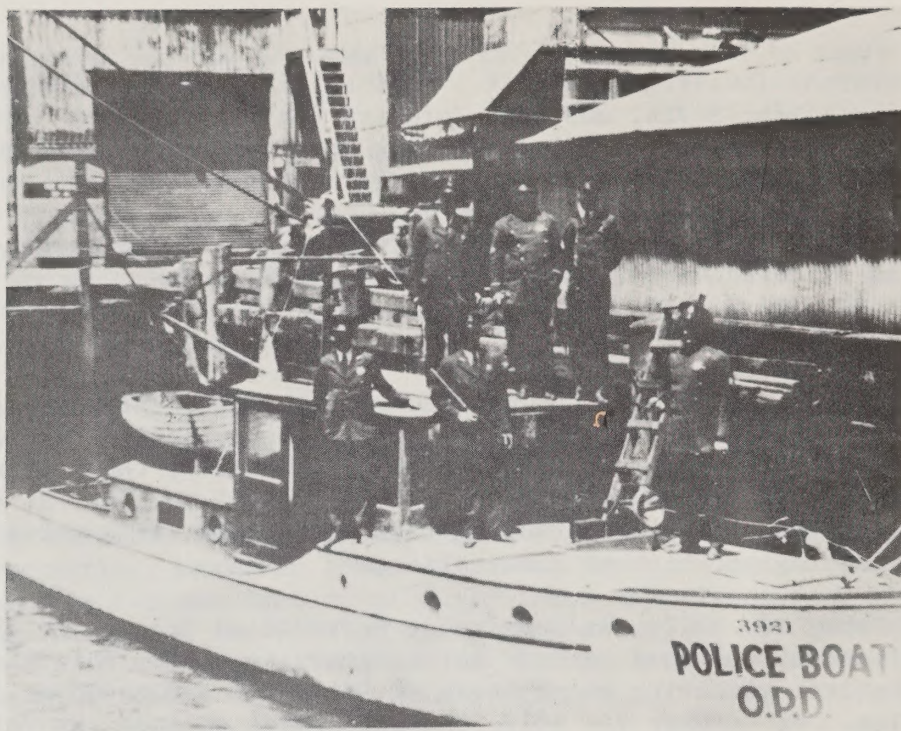
At times routine police work and wartime conditions were strangely juxtaposed.

In October, 1917, during a family disturbance call, Corporal Herman Rumetsch was shot and terribly wounded by a mentally unbalanced man. He was saved from death by George Stone, a young medical corpsman stationed at Angel Island. In 1918 Stone was killed on the Western Front.

The war provided new angles for bunco artists. It was necessary to enforce an Ordinance prohibiting unlicensed solicitations for "war relief."

By early 1918 so many officers had entered military service that the Department experienced a manpower shortage. To address this, the War Service Special Police were formed as a reserve or auxiliary police.

*John Henry Nedderman (October 2, 1875 - August 12, 1924) was appointed to the Department as a patrolman on October 10, 1906. He was promoted to Corporal April 15, 1913, and Sergeant March 1, 1915. He became Chief on August 24, 1917. He resigned as Chief May 16, 1919 and returned to duty as a Sergeant, leaving the Department on March 13, 1922.



The Police Boat

Waterfront Patrol

At the outbreak of the war there was concern about "reports of plots against government shipping and the shipyards." Because freighters often carried cargos of munitions and were vulnerable to sabotage or ordinary industrial accidents, an improved fire watch was vitally important on the estuary. For the first few months of the war regular Army troops were detailed to protect the waterfront. When they were withdrawn, the Department joined with other agencies to replace them.

In July, 1917, the Department acquired a launch which was used to supplement the existing water-borne harbor patrols. The crewmen worked twelve-hour shifts. Fear of sabotage abated by the end of the year, and the City Council discontinued the harbor patrol despite Chief Nedderman's testimony as to its value: the launch had saved two people from drowning in the Bay, recovered one stolen boat, and brought about "a complete cessation of complaints of theft which had been daily received from the waterfront."

Aliens

When the war broke out, it was said that there were 4000 enemy aliens in Oakland and the East Bay. Under the U.S. Attorney General's orders, the Department was required to register them all, and to keep track of them. When the registration program was completed, it was found that only 700 aliens had actually registered. Most of them were Germans and Austrians who

worked for steamship lines and munitions companies. Their employers did not want to lose their services, but they were subjected to stringent controls on where they could live, and the waterfront was strictly off limits to them.

The discrepancy between the estimated number of aliens in the East Bay and the number who actually registered was never resolved, and was a source of anxiety throughout the war.

Slackers

"Slacker" was the term used to describe a man who refused to enter military service. Some were conscientious objectors. Others were less principled people who did not register for the draft or who obtained employment in the shipyards, kept the jobs long enough to obtain identification as a worker in a war industry, and then quit -- without turning in the identification. Slackers were looked upon with contempt.

The Department was required to seek out slackers. One method of doing this was to make random checks of the identification carried by draft age men who were not in military uniform. Chief Nedderman ordered officers to "see that the streets are kept clean from well fed and healthy loafers. They must WORK or FIGHT."

At the beginning of the war, the draft age was 21 to 31 years of age. Later this was changed to 18 to 46. If a man did not have proper identification he was "sent in to Headquarters to be investigated by the Neutrality Squad and Department of Justice."*

Wartime Prohibition and Vice Control**

Temperance groups found that, when the United States entered World War I as a moral crusade to make the world safe for democracy, the climate of opinion became more sympathetic to prohibition. A major sign of this came with the War Department's first orders prohibiting the sale of liquor to military personnel.

The liquor industry acknowledged the change. In November, 1917, "Oakland Lodge No. 3 of the California Wet Federation" notified the Department that it had adopted a resolution pledging "heartly cooperation and assistance in every effort to enforce the law against the selling of liquor to soldiers

*Post-war records indicated that there were approximately 5,000 slackers in California, and some 250 in Oakland. These records do not differentiate conscientious objectors from draft evaders.

**This portion of the history only deals with prohibition enactments relating to military personnel during the war. Prohibition will be dealt with more completely in Part III.

or to sailors in uniform and in the suppression of bootlegging or other illicit sale of liquor."

But the War Department had only begun. It issued a long sequence of prohibition orders, each of which added more restrictions to the circumstances in which members of the armed forces could obtain a drink. The City Council followed the War Department's lead.

In January, 1918, a City Council resolution prohibited the "sale of liquor after 8 p.m., Monday through Friday, or after 9 p.m. on Saturday." This was followed in April by an Ordinance prohibiting the employment of "female waiters or entertainers in cafes, restaurants, or restaurants with bars."

In August, 1918, the War Department capped its string of prohibition orders by forbidding anyone "directly or indirectly" to supply a member of the armed forces with any alcoholic drink. In a communication to the Department, the Provost Marshal at San Francisco wrote, "It is requested that this order be given as much publicity as possible, as it has been the policy of civilians to invite members of the Army or Navy out to their homes and serve them intoxicating liquors under the bona fide guest law...This regulation makes...[the Army and the Navy]...bone dry."

Many servicemen and saloon operators were unwilling to abide by these regulations. When soldiers could not find a bar or restaurant to serve them, they resorted to ruses in order to purchase liquor, including the classic stratagem of hiring someone to make the purchase. On more than one occasion, officers enforcing the liquor laws found themselves involved in brawls with soldiers and sailors in downtown Oakland and at resorts like Idora Park. The assessment of blame in these incidents led to bad feelings, and the Provost Marshall threatened to place Oakland off limits to military personnel.

The war also brought an upsurge of prostitution. After the Army and Navy issued regulations forbidding "the keeping of houses of ill fame...within five miles of any military camp or cantonment," it became Departmental practice to book "female vagrants" and turn them over to the United States Marshal.

The Sedition Ordinance

As the war continued, and casualty figures rose, the majority of people increasingly demanded unconditional loyalty to the war effort. Oakland's Anti-Sedition Ordinance, one of many passed in cities throughout the country, was a sign of this. Prepared by Commissioner Jackson, and enacted in April, 1918, it was applauded by public opinion:

Ordinance No. 1378. N.S., An Ordinance Prohibiting the Utterance or Use of Seditious Language, or of Words Tending to Disturb the Peace, and Providing a Penalty for Violation of Any of the Provisions Hereof.

BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the City of Oakland, as follows:

SECTION 1. It shall be unlawful for any person within the City of Oakland to utter or use within the hearing of one or more persons any seditious language, words or epithets, or to address another, or to utter in the presence of another, any words, language or expression, or seditious remarks, having a tendency to create a breach of the peace.

SECTION 2. Any person who shall violate any of the provisions of this ordinance shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine not to exceed \$500.00 or by imprisonment not exceeding 6 months, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

SECTION 3. This ordinance shall take effect immediately.

There were frequent trials for alleged violations of this ordinance. Conviction resulted in stiff fines and imprisonment, as was discovered by six Germans who were arrested in a cafe for "toasting the Kaiser." The judge fined them \$200 each, sentenced them to 90 days in jail, directed that they be put to work on the chain gang, and expressed his personal regret that a more severe penalty was not possible. "Presidential warrants" were sought in order to incarcerate them for the rest on the war. At least one of these men was a citizen-soldier, and his commission as a Captain in the Medical Corps was withdrawn by the War Department.

Accusation did not automatically mean conviction, as is shown by a case which was tried in the Police Court in July, 1918:

James Roy Leavitt...shipyard worker, was found not guilty of seditious utterances by Police Judge Mortimer Smith...after an investigation of charges that he had declared in the presence of fellow employees that President Wilson was a 'grafter.' Leavitt, according to testimony, voted for Hughes at the last election, and became involved in an altercation during which he is said to have made the remarks in question.

Judge Smith discharged Leavitt when it developed that he came from an old Maine family whose members had fought in the service of the United States, and that he himself, although over the draft age, had attempted to enlist in the army and was rejected on account of physical disability. The court took the view that the remarks attributed to Leavitt were not the result of a discussion of war matters, but were of a purely political nature. Leavitt himself denied making them.

The Neutrality Squad

On July 23, 1918, Chief Nedderman issued a General Order which created the Neutrality Squad in order to consolidate the Department's various wartime responsibilities. Captain Thorvald Brown was named commander of the Squad (which was essentially "the morals squad" with a new name) and he was also placed in charge of the War Service Special Police. The Squad was directed to:

...co-operate with the government officers in the enforcement of all United States Laws, and the different proclamations of the President pertaining to the war. Captain Brown will also be in charge of and responsible for the proper registration of German Alien Enemies and Alien Females, their changes of residence, and all other regulations appertaining thereto.



Downtown Oakland: Noontime, December 11, 1918

The squad will investigate all complaints of sedition, disloyalty and utterances against the government or government officials. Reports of persons making scurrilous or abusive remarks about the United States Government, or the Flag of the United States, or soldiers or sailors of the United States Army or Navy, or the uniforms they wear. Persons alleged to be alien enemies or alien females not registered.

PETERSEN TO CLEAN PARIS FOR PERSHING

Captain Walter J. Petersen, former chief of police of Oakland, has charge of the policing for the American army of all of the northeastern part of France, according to the latest word that reaches this city in regard to him. In this district he is in supreme command, with only one superior between him and General Pershing, and this district is the most important one that is occupied by American troops, including the city of Paris.

Paris has been reported as the French city that was in the worst shape in its relations toward the American troops, and it was for the purpose of cleaning up Paris that Petersen was taken from his former post at Bordeaux and elevated to the position of a battalion commander in charge of an entire district rather than a single city. The work done by Captain Petersen at Bordeaux showed the American army officials that he was needed in a larger field and he was given charge of all of northeastern France from Paris to the limits reached by the American army of occupation on the Rhine.

But it was for the purpose of cleaning up Paris, at least as far as the American army went, that Petersen was expected to show his ability and his training secured as chief of police of Oakland. The last heard from Petersen was that he was on his way to Paris for inspection, and that he expected to appoint a new local commander for that city from his own staff at Bordeaux. Nothing has yet been heard as to what action he took and there is some local interest to know whether he appoints one of the Oakland boys that he kept with him to that important post.

From the Front Page of the Tribune
Thursday, January 30, 1919

The squad will also...investigate, in conjunction with the Department of Justice all persons arrested for violating the Selective Service Draft Laws (Slackers).

The Armistice

The Armistice of November 11, 1918, ended the fighting in France, but passions at home did not immediately subside. The Sedition Ordinance remained in effect for some time, and arrests of slackers continued into 1920. The Department performed parade duty in April, 1919, during the joyful celebrations when the East Bay regiments were demobilized. When the troops marched by City Hall, Oaklanders felt that the war was really over. The news in June that the Treaty of Versailles had been signed seemed anticlimactic.



Midsummer, 1919: The Troops Come Home

The Spanish Influenza

The terrible Spanish Influenza of 1918-1919 was a calamity which has been largely forgotten today. Medical historians estimate that throughout the world, this epidemic -- actually a pandemic -- killed 20 million people, more than were killed during the World War. Over 1,000 people died from it in Oakland.

The epidemic began almost unnoticed in the late summer of 1918 and reached its peak after the winter set in. In each case the victim displayed the symptoms of an ordinary cold -- chills, fever, and headache. Some victims recovered, but others, instead of getting better, became progressively weaker and died within a short time. Horrifyingly, some seemed to recover, and then suffered fatal relapses. It is thought that war-related fatigue and dietary deficiencies made many people susceptible to this deadly virus.

In October, 1918, 336 people died of influenza in Oakland. To avoid contamination, people spontaneously began wearing gauze face masks, and the City Council passed an ordinance requiring that they be worn in public. Schools were closed and large gatherings forbidden, but to no avail. Medical facilities were overcrowded, and to meet the emergency the City opened a temporary hospital.

The Police Bulletin for November 12, 1918 reprinted the following letter to Chief Nedderman from Daniel Crosby, the City Health Officer:

My Dear Chief,

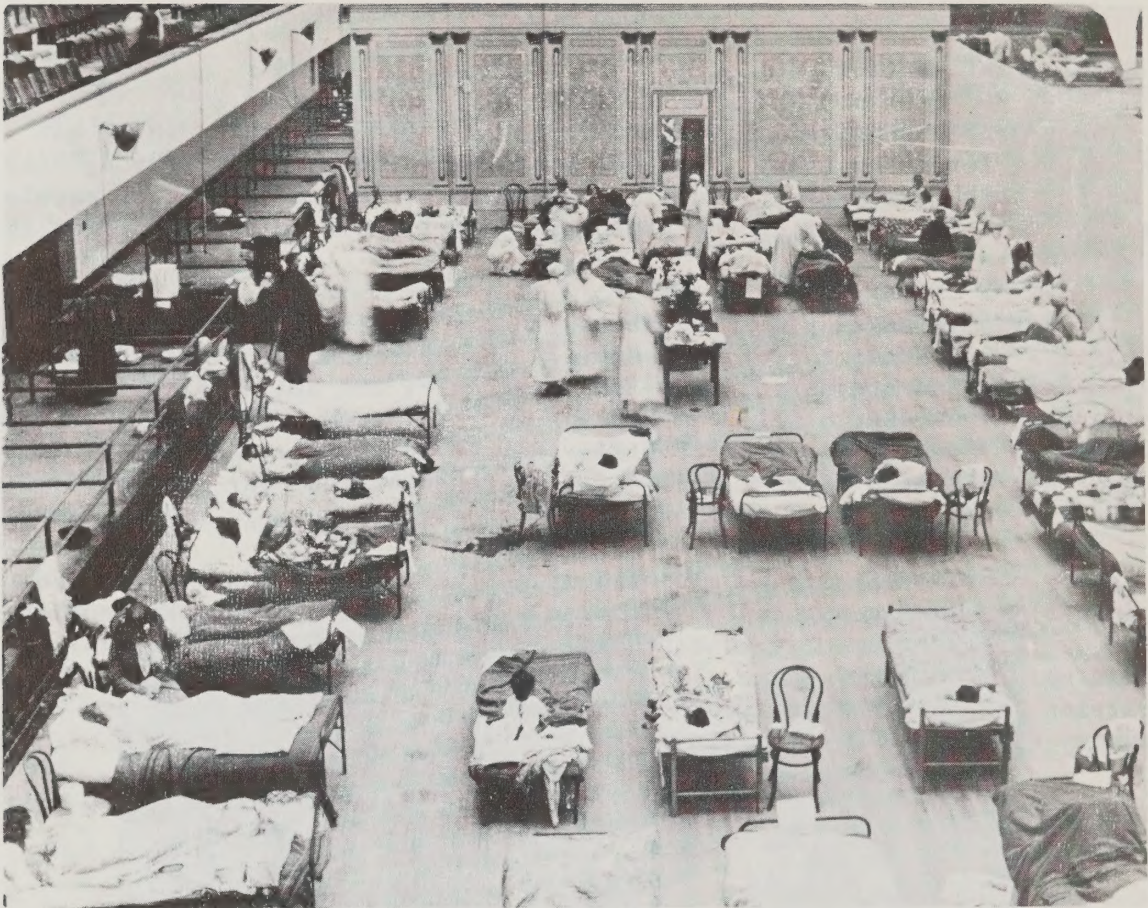
In as much as the Police Bulletin of the City is going to press at this time, I trust you may find space in it for the acknowledgment of the ready, effective and sympathetic co-operation of yourself and the men under you in getting our Municipal Influenza Hospital into operation and in helping in innumerable ways to accomplish and maintain its operation.

In the first days of our effort the work of your department -- in actual labor on duty and off -- and the marshalling of the forces at your command by you, saved us several days delay in opening our institution.

It also contains a notice from the Chief, written with unusual warmth of feeling:

TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Whenever a critical situation develops in any community the people look to the police for help and their appeal is always met with a hearty response...



The Municipal Influenza Clinic

Without thought of danger to himself, neglecting his family and sacrificing everything for the public welfare, the policeman does his duty as he sees it -- and more. Without hope of reward, without taking time to receive a 'thank you,' he is satisfied with having done his best.

Serving without ostentation, serving quietly, faithfully and effectively, this police department to a man has rendered unrewardable assistance in fighting the influenza epidemic and has again demonstrated the efficiency, unselfishness and general worth of every individual member.

Though our citizens have come to take the everyday sacrifices of the department as a matter of course and therefore do not recognize how much the department has done to help, I want you to know that I am proud to be a member of this department and particularly proud to be Chief of such a police force as you have shown yourselves, in this trying hour of need for unselfish devotion to the public weal.

Immediately following was the announcement that a scheduled examination for patrolman had been postponed. Like the rest of the City, the Department was stricken by the epidemic. At midwinter, as many as thirty officers a day were on the sick roll.

In November, Spanish Influenza claimed another 247 residents of the City, and in December, 104 more. Deaths rose again in January 1919, when 277 people died. Thereafter the number of deaths declined, and the epidemic faded away as mysteriously as it arrived. By April, it was over.

Throughout this period the Police Bulletin carried, almost like the tolling of bells, formal letters from bereaved families expressing gratitude for kindnesses done by police officers. They came alike from the families of Department members and from the general public.

(To be continued.)

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